

A N  
E S S A Y  
O N  
RIDICULE.

*Jocandi recte sapere est principium et fons.*



L O N D O N:  
Printed for A. MILLAR in the Strand.  
MDCCLIII.

AN

ESSAYS

ON

RIDICULE

JOHN R. JONES OF PRINCETON ET AL.



LONDON

Printed for A. MILLAR in the Strand

MDCCLIII



94 a 14.  
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T H E

# INVESTIGATOR.

Containing the following TRACTS:

I. ON RIDICULE.

II. ON ELIZABETH CANNING.

III. ON NATURALIZATION.

IV. ON TASTE.

---

Δοξα μὲν ἀνθρωποισι κακὸν μέγα, Πείρα δ' ἀρίστον.  
THEOGNIS.

---

L O N D O N :

Printed in the Year MDCCCLXII.



## Advertisement.

**T**HE following Essay was written by a man of business, for his winter evenings amusement, and belongs to a series of tracts, all tending to shew the usefulness and necessity of experimental reasoning in philological and moral enquiries.

As he is but a young trader in the way of literature, and his goods of a fabric somewhat new, he does not think it prudent to risque much of his stock upon one bottom. From the returns of approbation, which he shall receive from this small venture, he will be better enabled to judge what

what the demand is at market ; and will then know, with some degree of certainty, whether he ought to export any more of the same kind ; whether he should work up the materials, still on his hands, in another fashion ; or, which is most likely to happen, whether he had not better reserve them altogether for home consumption.



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## PART II

OF THE NATURE OF THE  
RELIGIOUS BELIEFS, AND  
THEIR HISTORY.

AN  
ESSAY  
ON  
RIDICULE.

PART I.

SECTION I.

**A**FTER a curious subject has been  
unsuccessfully treated by philoso-  
phers, poets, physicians, and di-  
vines of reputation, it might seem presump-  
tuous in one to attempt it, whose necessary  
studies have been of a nature little connected  
with deep erudition, and who has but few  
hours of leisure, from his ordinary occupa-  
tion, to put together the little he may have  
accidentally pickt up; were it not known,

B

at

PART at the same time, that many valuable and  
 I. surprising discoveries have accrued to mankind by the means of those from whom they were least to be expected. It is a trite observation, that printing was discover'd by a soldier, and gun-powder by a monk; from which, and many other instances, we may conclude, that the most extraordinary inventions were rather the effect of chance and subsequent trial, than of any profound forethought and contrivance.

The question, *whether Ridicule be a test of truth*, is one of those which have divided the learned for some years past, without producing any thing satisfactory, for or against it; and if I should in the following sheets cast any new light upon the subject, it is by means not unlike those of the discoverer of gun-powder. He felt, when perhaps his reflection was otherwise employed, that this composition had an uncommon force and quickness, called to mind what were its ingredients, and was only the historian of his crucible.

Those who have already handled the subject of *Ridicule*, have taken a very different method,



## ON RIDICULE.

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method, and, instead of examining what it was composed of, have not so much as settled, with any precision, what the thing was which one party so much extolled, and the other so much depreciated. SECT. I.

Lord SHAFTSBURY, who, by his recommending Ridicule as a test of truth, first gave rise to this controversy, expresses himself so variously, that it is as hard to guess what he means to recommend, as upon what grounds. In his *Letter concerning Enthusiasm*, he opposes it to formality, gravity, and melancholly, and calls it chearfulness, pleasantry, and good humour. Chearfulness is certainly an excellent quality in itself, and a disposition of mind very proper for those who are to enter into any enquiry; but how it should any way be a test of truth, more than a test of gold, wine, silk, or other valuable commodity, it is difficult to conceive. In his *Essay on the Freedom of Wit and Humour*, where one expects to see something more explicit, he rather seems to retract what he had so warmly asserted; speaks of bounds and limitations to this test of truth; hints at a kind of defensive raillery

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which

PART which is, as he explains it, some evasive me-

I. thod to keep truth, when discovered, from certain persons. And altho' he had said in his *Letter on Enthusiasm* \*, 'Tis only in a free nation, such as ours, that imposture has no privilege, and that neither the credit of a court, the power of a nobility, nor the awfulness of a church, can give her protection, and hinder from being arraign'd in every shape and appearance: yet, in his *Essay on the Freedom of Wit and Humour*, he jumbles raillery, burlesque, and ridicule together, and makes them the necessary language of slavery †.

*Non tali auxilio nec defensoribus istis----*

As this very ingenious nobleman has been commonly looked upon as the great patron and supporter of Ridicule, I thought it incumbent upon me to point out in a few words, how he has, or rather how he has not treated it. Those who want to see a more full examination of what his lordship has advanced upon that head, will find it in

\* Sect. II. near the beginning.

† Sect. IV. at the end.

## ON RIDICULE.

5

a book of *Essays* lately published, in opposi-  
tion to his opinions in general \*. But al-  
tho' I agree with the writer of those *Essays*  
in many of his remarks upon what Lord  
SHAFTSBURY has advanced concerning Ri-  
dicule; yet I shall take the liberty to dissent  
from him with regard to the subject itself:  
which I shall endeavour to prove to be what  
his Lordship at first asserted; one of *the tests*  
*of truth* (by its detection of falshood) and,  
as such, to be indulged without any limi-  
tation.

SECT.

I.

I am extremely sensible how difficult it is,  
even for the best writers, to convey their  
ideas with certainty by the means of gene-  
ral terms only. I shall therefore, in the pro-  
secution of this work, endeavour to ascer-  
tain my meaning by the help of examples;  
so that, if I should happen to mean nothing  
to the purpose, (a thing very common among  
essay writers) it will be immediately appa-  
rent.

Had the celebrated writers who have ex-  
ercised their pens upon the different sides of

\* *Essays on the Characteristics*, by JOHN BROWN,  
M. A. second edition.

PART this controversy, taken to the tract here

I. pointed out, to wit, the examination of the various examples of Ridicule, as they really exist in the works of men of acknowledged wit; it is scarce possible but that they must, long e'er now, have come to a better understanding. They could not have spent much time in the scrutiny, without observing, that there are two sorts of Ridicule; one of which is employed in discussing propositions, or matters of enquiry; and another, which has manner and actions for its province. A complaisance both for the vulgar language, and for that which has been used by the best authors, obliges one to call both these things by the name of Ridicule; tho' it will appear, that their nature and properties are very different. I shall therefore treat of them separately, beginning with that kind which is employed in matters of enquiry; because it is the most important in itself, and because it is that which gave rise to this controversy; being the only kind of Ridicule which can so much as pretend to be admitted as a test of truth.

Whatever then may hereafter befall the other, this Ridicule may be defin'd, *the art*  
of



*of shewing that to be ridiculous which is imagined to be so.* Perhaps I shall be told by some body, that this is the proper office of reason and argument. Whoever he be, I most heartily agree with him; having long thought that those advocates for Ridicule, who set it in opposition to reason, did its cause very little honour or service. I likewise join with the author of the *Essays on the Characteristics*, in placing Ridicule among the modes of eloquence; but as he has chosen to separate eloquence from argument, I must endeavour to reconcile them, before I can hope to have Ridicule received as a test of truth; a praise, which is certainly due to argument alone.

SECT.  
I.  


## SECTION II.

PART  
I.  


THE Essay writer, in his division of the several kinds of composition, has assigned to argument the province of convincing by reality; and to eloquence, that of persuading by fictitious appearances. That is, that eloquence or oratory is, some how or other, the art of dazzling or deceiving the understanding.

I do not profess in this Essay, as he has done in those he has published, to criticise the opinions of any author, except where my subject calls upon me; else I should perhaps be able to show, that what he advances, with regard to eloquence, might very well pass for a satire upon publick speaking in general, and upon that from the pulpit in particular. Indeed, to do him justice, he does not continue long in that opinion; but having sufficiently decried eloquence, in order to condemn Ridicule as one of its accomplices, he afterwards makes it amends, by acknowledging that eloquence is of the most excellent sort, when it is founded

ed

## ON RIDICULE.

9

ed upon argument drawn from the real ex-  
istence of things; so that there is no diffi-  
culty in concluding, that what he before said  
of eloquence in general, is only true of false  
eloquence.

SECT.  
II.

But there is nothing in all this learned perplexity about *eloquence* and *argument*, *conviction* and *persuasion*, *judgment*, *passion* and *imagination*, but what may be easily unravel'd; provided we do not suffer ourselves to be intangled in other people's opinions, but examine into the nature of the subject itself. I will therefore enter upon it as if it had never been touched before; at the same time with that brevity which becomes an episode, and an episode which perhaps is very little necessary.

Eloquence is the art of convincing and persuading. These two properties of eloquence do not so much denote two different kinds of it, as the two different purposes to which it may be applied. This will appear from an enquiry into the proper meaning and application of the words, and likewise from the practice of the best orators.

When

## PART

## I.

When any opinion is to be examined, or any assertion to be proved, then the sole aim of oratory is to convince. When any action is to be performed, or let alone, then the aim of oratory is to persuade. We say, *persuade to a thing*, in this latter case; and *convince of a thing*, in the former. Whenever a truth is to be investigated, the understanding alone is concerned; and therefore eloquence applies itself to the understanding only, with intention to convince. Whenever an action is to be promoted, eloquence applies itself to the two springs of human action, the understanding and the passions, alternately; endeavouring both to convince and persuade. From this necessity of mixing the argumentative eloquence on occasions of persuasion, the word *persuasion* receives a double signification; for it is common to say *persuaded of a thing* as well as *persuaded to it*: whereas the argumentative eloquence being simple and uncompounded, the word *convince* cannot be applied to any, but its own peculiar purpose of convincing the understanding of the truth or falshood of a position. It was therefore from its more comprehensive use, and by way of abbreviation, that eloquence



quence was called by some great men, the SECT.  
*art of persuasion*, taking *persuasion* both in its II.  
 proper and less proper sense \*. And, had  
 either CICERO or QUINTILIAN, put the art  
 they taught in so ridiculous a light, as to deny,  
 that it was likewise *the art of convincing by*  
*argument* †; we should, *ipso facto*, despise  
 their

\* Much of that sort of cunning nonsense, usually called wit, owes its being to the corruption and abuse of language. The double meaning of the word *persuadere* gave birth to that quaint expression recorded of St. AUGUSTIN, *Non persuadebis, etiamsi persuaseris*; which has no meaning at all, or only means, *Although you should convince me of the truth of what you advance, yet you shall never persuade me to take any step in consequence of such conviction*. The self same phrase is to be found in the *Plutus* of ARISTOPHANES; where one of the old men says to POVERTY, in answer to her harangue, ΟΥ ΓΑΡ ΠΕΙΣΕΙΣ ΟΤΑ' ΗΝ ΠΕΙΣΗΣ, and is explained as above by the Greek scholiast upon that passage.

† There cannot certainly be a more absurd attempt than that of persuading in matter of speculation without argument; and yet there are frequent phænomena that apologize, in some measure, for those who think it both practicable and easy. They may have perhaps observed the multitude persuaded of the truth of what the orator asserted, when there was nothing in his discourse that had the least appearance of argument; nay, when it was quite unintelligible.

This

PART their testimony, as coming from men whose  
 II. profession was to deceive.

Of

This is, no doubt, a common fact; tho' it is not owing to any delusive power of eloquence upon the imagination and passions, but acts by the bare force of personal credit and authority. The orator, by sounding periods, learned terms, a pompous manner, an earnestness of gesture, and a look of sincerity, convinces those simpletons (for upon no other audience will such oratory pass) that he is a great, a learned, and an honest man; and then uses this credit, so acquired, to fasten any opinion he pleases upon them. But this ridiculous sort of prepossession is not peculiarly the consequence of eloquence; it will be found to follow also upon rank, riches, and many other advantages, where no superiority of speech or understanding is pretended: whatever is said by a prince or a peer, carries with it great degree of persuasion from the rank of the person only. The same persuasion is generally attendant upon riches, *Et bene nummatum decrat suadela*. I lately heard a young gentleman relate an unlikely piece of news, in a company where it was received with some hesitation; upon which, he affirmed with great earnestness, that it was certainly true, for he had heard it from a man of 4000*l.* a year. Handsome women have the same privilege of persuading without argument, and by the like means; for, as their poet says,

*Whatever they approve is sweet,  
 And all is sense that they repeat.*

Fine

Of the argumentative eloquence we have SECT. II.  
examples in the works of ISOCRATES, LUCIAN, and other orators; who have had questions in philosophy, law, speculative politics, or philology for their topics. Of the mixed kind we find numberless examples in the historians, and in the orations of those who have engaged in pleading causes, or in the practice of war, divinity, or politics. Amongst the most famous in that way are DEMOSTHENES and CICERO; of whom, DEMOSTHENES apply'd himself chiefly, if not altogether, to the understanding of his auditors; even in those orations, his *Philippics*, where he meant to animate and rouse them

Fine cloaths, a decent gown and band, a diamond ring, are all instruments of great energy in promoting this sort of conviction. Nay, there are assemblies, tho' I believe, only of the fanatical sort, where the reverse of all those; to wit, the orator's bad language, awkward delivery, poverty, mean condition, and unfashionable apparel, will give him great credit in the eyes of his hearers, and produce conviction out of falshood and absurdity. So that this persuasion, when it is produced, is not so much a proof of the power of eloquence, as of the weakness of understanding in the generality of men; who have seldom any opinions, but what are obtruded upon them by authority.

PART them to action; whilst CICERO, adapting

I. himself to the times in which he lived, often throws in a greater share of the pathetic than would have succeeded with a people in whom the reasoning faculty was more cultivated. This is the cause, as the Essay writer observes, *that severe and able judges have prefer'd DEMOSTHENES to CICERO; for, as the imagination and passions are then most refined and just, when they bear to the same point with reason; so that species of eloquence is the noblest, which tends to conduct them thither\**.

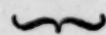
In my next section I shall endeavour to show, in what manner Ridicule becomes a branch of this *noblest species of eloquence*; and cannot conceive, upon what grounds my Lord SHAFTSBURY's antagonist gave it a place amongst the pathetic, or those which act by an application to the passions. He says it excites

\* It is remarkable, that the words used to express the eloquence of Greece and Rome, convey a just idea of their several characters. In Greek, a piece of eloquence, let the subject be what it will, is called *logos*, a *discourse*; and the person who delivers it, *rhetor*, or *speaker*; whereas, in Latin, the performance is called *oratio*, from *orare* to entreat, plead, or beg; and the performer is called *orator*, an entreater, pleader, or beggar.



excites the passion of contempt. Allowing him that contempt and laughter (the latter of which Ridicule never fails to excite) are both of them passions; a very little reflection will convince us, that Ridicule is not therefore to be ranked amongst the pathetic kinds of eloquence; because, in pathetic eloquence, the passions are the instruments, upon which the artist plays, in order to produce that persuasion he aims at: whereas, contempt and laughter, call them what you will, are, in matters of enquiry, the consequences of the detection of that sort of falshood, which we call the ridiculous; and are not the means, but the end †.

SECT. II.



† Some people may imagine, because pathetic is derived from *pathos* passion, that therefore every thing, wherein passion is concerned, either as cause, means or consequence, must be pathetic. At this rate a slap in the face would be pathetic; if either he who received, or he who gave it happened to be in a passion. But this is trusting too much to the infallibility of syllables.

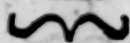
SECT.

## SECTION III.

PART  
I.

W HEN a general marches his army into the enemy's country, he never thinks it consistent with prudence to leave any fortified place behind him untaken, unless the garrison is very contemptible. In like manner, he who strives upon paper to extend the dominions of truth, should take care to obviate all the objections that have been offered against the cause he undertakes, however groundless they may appear to him, while they are so plausible as to have the countenance of some men of sense. It is for this reason, that a section of this short work has been wholly employed in adjusting certain differences betwixt eloquence and argument, suggested by the author of the essays; a task, which would not otherwise have been necessary: since whatever is employed in the search of truth, whether it be addressed to men's knowledge or their prejudices, whether it tends to conduct or mislead, must ever be addressed to the understanding; and, if eloquence, of that

that sort of eloquence which consists of argument alone.

SECT.  
III.

Having thus satisfied myself, and perhaps some of my readers, of one important truth, *that argumentative Ridicule is argumentative*, and consequently one of the methods of reasoning: I will venture a step farther, and assert, that it is one of the methods the best founded, the easiest comprehended, and the least subject to fallacy; for it will always be found, AN APPEAL TO EXPERIENCE by some familiar image or allusion, which convinces by the justness, while it pleases by the novelty and contrast of its application.

It is in this last quality, *novelty*, that distinguishes it from what is commonly called serious reasoning; and it is the first, *justness*, that distinguishes it from buffoonery or false Ridicule: for *false Ridicule is an appeal to false facts, or to true facts not parallel or applicable to the point in question*. Its name of Ridicule it receives only from a consequence, that never fails to attend it; for a serious falshood is never confuted by a sudden allusion to a trivial or domestic fact,

C

without

PART without raising a smile or laugh in the  
I. hearers.

Those who are not willing to receive these properties of Ridicule upon my bare assertion, must look for the proof of them in the works of those authors, who have been most famous for their excellency in that way of writing. There it was that these assertions were formed, and thither I refer my reader ; not imagining that he would rest the cause upon any instances, which I might partially chuse in its support. However, by way of illustration at least, I will give one instance of true, and another of false Ridicule ; which I have chosen out of a great number, because they both belong to one transaction, and that of a nature very public and interesting.

When that famous bill, in the year 1733, called the Excise Scheme, was upon the point of being carried in the House of Commons, a number of the most substantial merchants of the city of London, agreed to sign a petition against it ; and, that it might come with what they called greater weight, they proceeded in a long train



train of coaches and chariots to present it SECT.  
III.  
themselves in a body. This petition, and the formidable cavalcade that attended it, were no sooner made known to the house than the chief-minister stood up and spoke against the manner of presenting it with great eloquence and spirit; saying, amongst other things, That, altho' those gentlemen were contented in their writing with the title of humble petitioners, their appearance in Palace-Yard gave them more the air of another sort of petitioners, commonly known by the name of *Sturdy Beggars*. An image that gives a juster idea of the illegallity and impropriety of their proceeding, than a regular oration of half an hour could have effected. For what ought to give weight to a petition in an affair of that importance to the nation, but the matter and reasons of the petition itself? And what could be more just than to call those *Sturdy Beggars*, who, under pretence of petitioning, meant to extort what they wanted, by intimidating the members of parliament, and bullying the legislature?

How then was this to be answered? It is, I must own, a puzzling question. And

PART yet an answer, of some sort or other, was

I. absolutely necessary, to prevent the party  
from being delivered over to eternal laughter  
and confusion of face. For, as POPE says,

*To vice and folly to confine the jest,  
Sets half the world, God knows, against the  
rest ;*

*Did not the sneer of more impartial men  
At sense and virtue ballance all again :  
Judicious wits spread wide the ridicule,  
And charitably comfort knave and fool.*

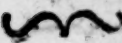
With this humane design, one of the  
ringleaders of the patriots, for the time  
being, rose up ; and, without taking notice  
of the intention of the minister's speech,  
which was expressed in a manner not at all  
ambiguous, laid hold, with great seeming  
heat, of the word *Beggar* ; wondring to  
hear any man call those *Beggars*, who were  
the pillars of the national commerce, and  
who had personally so great a share of the  
national property ; enlarging much upon  
their riches, which had never been brought  
into question ; and finishing the harangue  
with a history of the mischiefs that befel the  
government of Flanders, by a governor  
contemptuously

contemptuously bestowing the appellation of *SECT. Gueux* upon the citizens of Ghent. See all *III.* on a sudden the tables turned. For this reasoning, such as it was, favoured the designs of the party, and the then reigning prejudices of the vulgar; and, in consequence of it, a ballad was composed, beginning

*Of all the trades of London  
A beggar's trade's the best,  
Since BOB allows us that trade  
Who ruins all the rest;  
And a begging we must go.*

Which acknowledged the merchants to be *beggars*, and put their beggary in a multitude of new and diverting lights, not very honourable for the man who had obtained, for many years, the sole administration of public affairs; and who had so insolently, as was supposed, upbraided them with that misery, of which he must have been the principal cause.

This, in a week's time, was spread over the most distant parts of the island, and raised an enthusiastic rage in the populace,

PART that might have been attended with the most  
I.  cruel consequences, if any accident had put it in motion. For, as true Ridicule is one of the most forcible and expeditious of all the methods of reasoning; so false Ridicule, whenever it can be brought to take effect, as it is the quickest, is the most to be dreaded of all the methods of sophistry.

Had the chief minister really called the merchants of London *Beggars*, he would have furnished evidence, from his own mouth, for putting his administration in the most contemptible light; and the *ballad* would have been true Ridicule: but, as that pretended fact was known, to the sober and well informed to be false, the performance could not to any such appear otherwise, than as a sophistical piece of buffoonery.

S E C T.



## S E C T. IV.

**I**T will probably be objected to Ridicule, SECT. IV.  
that, even as it has been describ'd and exemplify'd in the foregoing Section, it is capable of serving the purpose of screening imposture, as well as of exposing it; and therefore a very ambiguous and insufficient *criterion* of truth. This objection is not without foundation. But if we nicely examine the several instances of false Ridicule from whence it arises, the objection will be found not owing to any imperfection in the nature of Ridicule, but to the weakness and prejudice of those for whose conviction it is intended. He who should find out a method, by the immediate application of which fools and prejudiced persons might be enabled to distinguish truth from falsehood, would find a philosopher's stone indeed. But there is no likelihood that such a *succedaneum* for good sense will ever be found, or that it was ever intended by the Almighty, who is equally the father of the wise and of the silly; and who has, no doubt, ordained all those diversities, which exist in nature, for the

PART happiness of the whole. It is he who has  
 I. given, according to the poet,

*Fear to the statesman, rashness to the chief,  
 To kings presumption, and to crouds belief.*

*Mundus vult decipi* : and I write not for the many, whom it would be perhaps as unfit, as it is impossible to undeceive. What species of reasoning is there, the most serious and formal, that has not been made the channel for conveying error and absurdity to the understanding, under the appearance of truth? And when we say, that this sort of reasoning is least liable to be abused, it is saying as much for it, as can be said for most things, in which the frail race of man is concern'd. False reasoning, by the abuse of words, is very easy and common, because the ideas attached to general terms are very various, indistinct, and easily confounded; but the properties of things, especially those of a vulgar and domestic nature, in which the force and pleasure of Ridicule chiefly consists, cannot safely be summon'd for evidence to support any principle or general assertion, unless that principle be true, and consistent with the existence of things.

But

But, however excellent this specific may be, I will allow that, like other excellent remedies, it may become poison in the hands of a quack; and that it is of consequence to have an antidote always ready upon occasion. This we need not be long in search of, since there is one handed down to us in the works of a very ancient and eminent physician, and which I am able to recommend upon my own repeated experience, altho it has been discountenanced of late by several apothecaries; either because they did not understand the *recipe*, or because they had not those drugs in their shops, that were necessary for the composition.

SECT.  
IV.

To leave parables, and to explain myself like a man of this world, this *recipe* is no other than that rule of GORGIAS, quoted by ARISTOTLE, which the critic upon the *Characteristicks* has re-translated and new-applied after my Lord SHAFTSBURY, and which I shall take the like freedom of translating again, and new-applying after him; always however observing that good manners and deference, which is due to a living author.

The

PART  
I.

The passage in ARISTOTLE translated verbatim, runs thus, *But with regard to those things that excite laughter, since they seem to have their use in debate, we ought, says GORGIAS, to discuss the adversary's serious argument by Ridicule, and his Ridicule by serious argument; rightly speaking\*.*

But, having expounded this passage with sufficient accuracy, as far as regards the relation

\* The original words are, ΠΕΡΙ ΔΕ ΤΩΝ ΓΕΛΟΙΩΝ, ΕΠΕΙΔΗ ΤΙΝΑ ΔΟΚΕΙ ΧΡΗΣΙΝ ΕΧΕΙΝ ΕΝ ΤΟΙΣ ΑΓΩΓΙΣ, ΚΑΙ ΔΕΙΝ, ΕΦΗ ΓΟΡΓΙΑΣ, ΤΗΝ ΜΕΝ ΣΠΟΥΔΗΝ ΔΙΑΦΘΕΙΡΕΙΝ ΤΩΝ ΕΝΑΝΤΙΩΝ, ΓΕΛΩΤΙ· ΤΟΝ ΔΕ ΓΕΛΩΤΑ, ΣΠΟΥΔΗ. ΟΡΘΩΣ ΛΕΓΩΝ. Rhet. lib. iii. cap. 18. And they are thus translated by the author of the *Essays*. *As Ridicule seems to be of some use in pleading, it was the opinion of GORGIAS that you ought to confound your adversary's serious argument by raillery, and his raillery by serious argument. And he judged well.* It were to be wished that the translator had inform'd us by what authority he has render'd the word ΔΙΑΦΘΕΙΡΕΙΝ *to confound*, in a diametrical opposition to all the hitherto known meanings of it. For what can be more opposite than *to confound* and *to separate*? ΔΙΑΦΘΕΙΡΕΙΝ in its most simple sense, means *to separate thoroughly*, and in all the usual applications



lation betwixt English and Greek words, my work will be but half done, unless I translate those words again into their precise meaning, and shew what relation they have to realities.

SECT.  
IV.

All men, who engage in any controversy with the candid intention of discovering truth, cannot fail of observing, how much their laudable endeavours are obstructed by the imperfection and abuse of language. I believe we may venture to say, that this is the very soul of controversy, and that thinking men could not disagree in their opinions concerning any thing that comes within the reach of human reason, if it were possible to find a number of signs, that should, with exactness, convey the same ideas from one person to another. Common language is far from being equal to this purpose; and the only remedy for the defect is, by definitions and examples to explain the principal terms that are to be employed; and then

plications very little deviates from this its original meaning. Such are to *demolish*, *consume*, *corrupt*, *discuss*. Of these I have made use of the last, as it has the additional authority and support of all the Latin translators of this passage, that have fallen into my hands.

it

PART it signifies little, what these terms are ; whe-

I. ther they are such as have been already used,  
 or others arbitrarily devised for the occasion.

The term *Ridicule* has been already defin'd and exemplify'd ; so that there can be no difficulty, at least with regard to my idea of it ; but the term *serious argument* bears so many different meanings, that to use it without the like caution would be to involve us in a labyrinth of confusion. However, before I pretend to define its proper meaning in the above sentence in ARISTOTLE, I will first point out, in a few lines, how this definition comes to be necessary ; and the rather, as the enquiry is not barely verbal, but will likewise throw some light upon the main subject.

There is, and no doubt always has been, in all places, in ancient Athens, as well as in modern London, a great number of shallow-pated people, who seeing the tribute of applause, and kind reception, that never fails to be paid to true wit and humour, are willing to have likewise their share of it ; but, not being blest with the lawful means,

viz.

viz. a lively fancy, and a sound judgment, employ such means as nature has bestowed upon them. Some of these facetious gentlemen will lay joint-stools in the way of their companions, pin their skirts to the table-cloth, archly slip away their chairs from under them, and abundance of other conceits, from whence nothing but a monkey could claim any merit. But those shin-breaking, clothes-daubing, chair-withdrawing wits, are each of them a CERVANTES or a CHESTERFIELD, in comparison of another sort of idiotical vermin, who to be thought witty, will deceive you by a direct lie; or keep you a considerable time in suspense by an ambiguity; and then laugh, and tell you *it was a joke*. The consequences of this pitiful practice are deplorable; for, by its frequency, not only the language is corrupted by the misapplication of words; but that innocence, confidence, and security, which constitute the great pleasure and dignity of conversation, amongst those of liberal minds, is often hurt and confounded. How often do we hear even men of tolerable breeding, ask one another, *Are you in jest or serious?* that is, *Do you lie or speak truth?* and yet by the common-

ness

SECT.

IV.

PART nefs of this sort of jesting not incur the re-  
 I. sentment, that would follow the question  
 properly expressed.

We see therefore, that by *serious* is often meant *sincere* and *in earnest*; and by jesting, their opposites, *lying* and *trifling*; but in this treatise we allow no such meaning to them; and I trust that in this we walk hand in hand with ARISTOTLE. Ridicule, or true jesting, is, with regard to sincerity, as much serious, as any other method of reasoning; and the more apt to promote both its desired consequences of conviction and laughter, the more the sentiment of the dispenser is sincere, and his deportment grave. What then is it which distinguishes, what we call *serious argument* from *Ridicule*? That will be easily found, if the reader will give himself the trouble of turning back to that place, where I account for the name of *Ridicule*; he will there find, that it is so called *from its exciting laughter in the hearers*; so, in like manner, the other sorts of reasoning are called *serious*, from their *not exciting laughter*, without any regard to their being sincere or otherwise.

Having



Having thus fully explained my terms, I SECT. IV.  
will proceed to illustrate the rule of GORGIAS, by shewing *that a jest, that will not bear a serious examination, is certainly false wit*; and likewise, however *hardy* it may appear to the critic upon Lord SHAFTSBURY, *that an argument, that will not bear Ridicule, is certainly false logic*. In other words, *that gravity is the proper test of Ridicule, and Ridicule the proper test of gravity*; even as the rule of addition is the test of subtraction, and subtraction of addition. I hope that gentleman will not call this likewise, *a see-saw sort of proof*, and say, it is *trying the justness of the square by the work that is formed by it* \*.

But one short story will clear up this matter better than a volume of dry terms; and one now occurs to my memory, which, I believe, I have formerly met with in the Cambridge jests, or some other valuable repository of that kind.

\* *Essay on the Characteristicks*, Sect. IX.

As

**PART** As an Oxford scholar was sitting at supper,  
**I.** in the Christmäss vacation, with his father  
 and mother, plain sensible country-people,  
 the discourse fell, as is natural, upon the  
 university ; and led the youth insensibly in-  
 to a declamation in praise of learning in ge-  
 neral, and particularly of logic. I should  
 be glad to know, says the father, what this  
 same logic is, you are so mightily fond of.  
 It is, says the scholar, the art of making  
 people believe whatever we please. Ay, says  
 the old man, that's curious indeed. Prithee,  
 Tom; give your mother and me a short  
 flourish of it, that we may have some rea-  
 son to admire as well as you. Just as he  
 spoke, a couple of minc'd pyes being set  
 upon the table ; I will prove, says the scho-  
 lar, that here are three pyes. That will  
 oblige us extremely, says the old folks. No-  
 thing more easy, says the son. You will  
 grant me, that this is one. Yes. And that  
 this is two. No doubt. Why then, says this  
 young Plato, if you put one and two to-  
 gether, they make three. O wonderful !  
 cries the farmer. Then, my dear, conti-  
 nues he, addressing himself to his wife, you  
 shall

## ON RIDICULE.

33

I shall take one pye, I another, and Tom shall have the third, to encourage him in the pursuit of such excellent studies. SECT. IV.

Here is an example of *serious argument* without truth in itself, or sincerity in the person by whom it is used ; and here is *Ridicule* to demolish it, which is true, and in earnest. If any one objects to my example, that what I call *serious argument* is in reality ridiculous and silly ; it is fit, that I inform such an objector, once for all, that it is only such serious argument, that Ridicule pretends to destroy ; and that it is only such serious argument, that shuns and disclaims the test of Ridicule. Had our scholar contented himself with proving, that two pyes and one made three, he might have set all the Ridicule of RABELAIS at defiance. So much for logic, now for Ridicule.

This diverting manner of reasoning, altho the least fitted, as has been before observed, to convince people of what is contrary to the nature of things ; has been nevertheless sometimes employed for that purpose, and perhaps not without some success,

D

upon

PART upon minds weak and prejudiced : and being of a rapid and collective nature, it is necessary to stop its progress by some method of reasoning more slow and analytical ; which may, like FABIVS against HANNIBAL, *cunctando restituere rem.*

Dr. SWIFT, whose works afford many examples of *true Ridicule*, now and then gives us an instance of the *false*, chiefly, if not altogether, owing to the force of party-spirit ; which never fails to incline those, who are under its influence, to a perversion of truth, let their good sense and natural love of truth be ever so great. It was this spirit which prompted that ingenious writer, born with a disposition the most remote from slavish, to endeavour to ridicule the whig principle of *the right in the people of resisting tyrants* ; a principle which is in reality the sentiment of human nature, and which by an appeal to numberless facts throws the Ridicule with irresistible force upon its opposers. What then could those expect, who were so rash as to engage common sense at her own weapons, but to leave a sad example of the insufficiency of human wit, when improperly and unworthily applied ?

This



This waggery has for title, *Mrs. BULL's* SECT. IV.  
*vindication of the indefeasible right of Cuck-*  
*oldom incumbent upon wives, in case of the ty-*  
*ranny, infidelity, or insufficiency of their hus-*  
*band's ; being a full answer to the Doctor's*  
*sermon against Adultery.* And it is intro-  
 duced into that excellent piece of allegorical  
 humour, *The History of John Bull*, of which  
 it makes a part ; as a wen makes a part of  
 the fair body that is disgraced by it.

To detect the fallacy of this pretended  
 piece of Ridicule, let us follow the advice  
 of ARISTOTLE, and reduce it to the for-  
 mality of a syllogism or two. As thus : First,  
 the author ironically informs you, that

A wife is to her husband, what a nation  
 is to its king :

Now, it being lawful for a nation to shake  
 off its king whenever it is displeased with  
 him, and to take another in his room :

*Ergo*, it is lawful for a wife to renounce her  
 husband, whenever he incurs her dis-  
 pleasure, and to confer her favours upon  
 any one she likes better.

PART To make this ironical fyllogism serve the  
 I. purpose of the party, the faithful reader is  
 charitably supposed to resolve it into the following; which he will not fail to do, *couste qui'l couste*, if he be a true son of SACHEVEREL.

It is contrary to all order and the common sense of mankind, that a wife should, upon any occasion, think herself authorised to abjure her fidelity to her husband.

And a nation being exactly to its king, what a wife is to her husband :

*Ergo*, it is contrary to common sense to believe, that any failure in a king can ever absolve his subjects from their allegiance. *Quod erat demonstrandum.*

It requires very little scrutiny to discover, wherein the fallacy lies of this reasoning; for it appears, at the first glance, that the whole is founded upon a supposition, that a king stands in the same relation to the people he governs, that a husband does to his wife: which is so manifestly otherwise, that it were an abuse of paper to shew in how many points the difference consists.

Besides,

Besides, the author, for the sake of this absurd buffoonery, has destroyed that allegorical consistency which is so divertingly preserved throughout the rest of the performance. And whereas Mr. *Bull*, in the body of the work, represents the English nation, and Mrs. *Bull* the parliament; in this excrescence Mr. *Bull* is forced to represent the king of England, and Mrs. *Bull* the nation. An algebraist, who, in the progress of his calculation, makes the letter *b* sometimes stand for one number and sometimes for another, has no chance of producing a solution, that will do him credit. And, for my own part, if I may be admitted an evidence, as well as counsel, in this case, I declare, that I never found, in reading these two chapters of SWIFT, any more inclination to laugh, than to be convinced; and therefore doubt not, but the verdict will be brought in, *False Ridicule*, and consequently no test of truth.

SECT.  
IV.

## SECTION V.

PART  
I.

IT is not enough, that a position is false; to make it ridiculous, and a proper object for Ridicule, it must likewise be IMPORTANT. When HORACE says, *Parturiunt montes, nascitur ridiculus mus*, he does not mean, that the mouse was ridiculous in itself; but that it only became so by the mighty expectations, which this pompous and important delivery had occasioned. And although *importance* or *gravity* is not, as Lord SHAFTSEURY asserts, *the essence of imposture*; it is so far the *essence* of the *ridiculous*, that it is easy to produce a multitude of instances, where Ridicule has justly fallen upon sayings, that were not otherwise false, than as they were not adequate, nor of a piece, with the solemnity of the design.

One of these examples is recorded of DIOGENES the Cynic, which I shall relate at length, for the benefit of such of my readers, as may not be particularly read in the history of those *wags*, whom the ancients called



## ON RIDICULE.

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called *philosophers*; and who, in reality, de-  
served that honoured name much better, than  
some of their more serious brethren, for  
reasons already hinted.

SECT.

V.

PLATO having defined a man *A two-legg'd animal without feathers*, in the hearing of  
DIOGENES, the description appeared to him  
extremely ridiculous, and he resolved to  
expose it to the laughter of the public. To  
do this effectually, he cast about in search  
of some contemptible animal, that might  
answer the description; but could find none.  
Convinced at last, that he could not attack  
his rival on the side of *falsehood*, he gave over  
that search; but, as he still lay open on the  
side of *insignificance*, by a definition so un-  
becoming the real dignity of the subject, the  
supposed dignity of the philosopher, and the  
scientific pomp of words in which it was  
dressed; he resolved to make that example,  
which he strove in vain to find ready made.  
So having stript a cock of its feathers, he  
hid it under his cloak, and setting it suddenly  
upon its legs, before PLATO and his ad-

D 4

mirers,

PART mirers, he cryed out, *Behold the man of*  
 I PLATO!

This was thought a witty thing, at the time, and has been handed down as such through many generations. It was certainly true Ridicule, as to *importance*; and yet the thing ridiculed was not shewn to be otherwise false, but the contrary; as the ridiculer was obliged to appeal, not to the nature of things, but to what was manifestly artificial.

But, to make Ridicule compleatly triumphant, it is necessary, that it should be employed upon what is compleatly ridiculous; that is, what is both *false* and *important*. It is for this reason, that of all the different absurdities, which have disgraced the human species, there is none, that has been the cause of so much true wit and Ridicule, as *false religion*. And indeed how is it possible for those, on whom the Almighty has bestowed faculties of mind superior to others, to employ them more properly than in vindicating his honour; and endeavouring to communicate their own just sentiments in a familiar

familiar way to those of their fellow crea-  
tures, who are less happily endowed?

SECT.  
V.  



How necessary a task this has been, let all history testify. For, from the most early times, there never has been wanting a set of impostors, who made it their business to practise upon the fear, ignorance, and credulity of the weaker and more numerous part of mankind, by representing the Eternal Being not such as he appears in his glorious works, but such as best suited their base purposes. And yet *in no time was God without witness*, as St. PAUL expresses it; as there have been found in every age some men of superior sense and honesty, who have endeavoured, and often with success, to withdraw their weak brethren from that impious yoke, by exposing to laughter those lies and absurdities, which had been imposed upon them instead of fact and argument.

LUCIAN, one of the most correct writers amongst the ancients, and the greatest master of that sort of analogical reasoning, which we call Ridicule, has employed his  
wit,

PART wit, with great success, against the foolish  
I. worship and abominable notions of the  
Deity, as by law and custom established in  
his days. And, before him many others,  
particularly the Latin Satirists, JUVENAL,  
PERSIUS, and HORACE, thought it their  
duty to turn those serious matters into merri-  
ment. To eke out this short treatise, in the  
German fashion, with thread-bare scraps of  
Latin, and by quoting from authors, that  
are intimately known to all those, who under-  
stand the language in which they are written,  
would be tiresome and impertinent. I will  
therefore exemplify this part of my subject  
by a piece of Ridicule, much more excel-  
lent, as well as more ancient, than any that  
is to be found in the authors above men-  
tioned, which is preserved in the latter part  
of the 13th chapter of *The wisdom of SOLO-  
MON*. I shall insert the whole of it, that I  
may be sure of indemnifying my reader for  
his trouble, by presenting him with a piece  
of most compleat *eloquence*, which might  
not otherwise have fallen into his hands.

I. Surely



1. Surely vain are all men by nature, who SECT.  
are ignorant of GOD, and could not out of the V.  
good things that are seen, know him that is;   
neither by considering the works, did they ac-  
knowledge the work-master;

2. But deemed either fire, or wind, or the  
swift air, or the circle of the stars, or the  
violent water, or the lights of Heaven to be  
the Gods which govern the world.

3. With whose beauty, if they being de-  
lighted, took them to be Gods; let them know  
how much better the Lord of them is: for the  
first author of beauty hath created them.

4. But if they were astonished at their  
power and virtue, let them understand by  
them, how much mightier he is that made  
them.

5. For by the greatness and beauty of the  
creatures, proportionably the maker of them is  
seen.

6. But

**PART** 6. But yet for this they are the less to be  
 I. blamed : for they, peradventure, err seeking  
 ~~~~~ GOD and desirous to find him.

7. For, being conversant in his works, they search him diligently and believe their sight : because the things are beautiful that are seen.

8. Howbeit neither are they to be pardoned.

9. For if they were able to know so much, that they could aim at the world, how did they not sooner find out the LORD thereof?

10. But miserable are they, and in dead things is their hope, who called them gods which are the work of mens hands, gold and silver to shew art in, and resemblances of beasts, or a stone good for nothing, the work of an ancient hand.

11. Now a carpenter that felleth timber, after he hath sawn down a tree meet for the purpose, and taken off all the bark skilfully  
 round

round about, and hath wrought it handsomely, and made a vessel thereof fit for the service of man's life \*. SECT. V.

12. And, after spending the refuse of his work to dress his meat, hath filled himself;

13. And taking the very refuse among those which served to no use, (being a crooked piece of wood and full of knots) hath carved it diligently when he had nothing else to do, and formed it by the skill of his understanding, and fashioned it to the image of a man;

14. Or made it like some vile beast, laying it over with vermilion, and with paint

\* The kindred, which, in a carver's shop, a bench or stool may claim to a god, is no less obvious to the sensible few, than it is comical. We find it accordingly introduced by HORACE, who strikes at the whole pandæmonium of heathen idolatry, through the sides of their brother PRIAPUS,

*Olim truncus eram ficulnus, inutile lignum:  
Cum faber incertus scamnum faceretne Priapum,  
Maluit esse Deum.*

L. 1. Sat. 8.

PART colouring it red, and covering every spot there-

I. in.

15. And when he had made a convenient room for it, set it in a wall, and made it fast with iron :

16. For he provided for it that it might not fall, knowing that it was unable to help itself, (for it is an image and hath need of help.)

17. Then maketh he prayer for his goods, for his wife and children, and is not ashamed to speak to that which hath no life.

18. For health, he calleth upon that which is weak : for life, prayeth to that which is dead : for aid, humbly beseebeth that which hath least means to help : and, for a good journey, he asketh of that which cannot set a foot forward :

19. And for gaining and getting, and for good success of his hands, asketh ability to do, of him that is most unable to do any thing.

Here



Here is truly *serious reasoning*, that tends by investigation to the knowledge of the Divine Being, as far as human faculties are capable to go, and which Momus himself would not be able to ridicule; and here is *Ridicule* to expose the absurdity of the popular notions and practices, that will stand the examination of ARISTOTLE with all his dialectics.

SECT.

V:

The Critic upon Lord SHAFTSBURY appears however to be a great enemy to this familiar way of trying religious opinions; and finishes the 7th section of his *Essay* with what he seems to think very much to its disadvantage, and the disadvantage of Ridicule in general, in these words: *It seems therefore, that his Lordship's observation (which contains the quintessence of his associate's work, and which probably was the leaven, that leavened the whole lump of malice and dulness) instead of being favourable to Ridicule, as a test of truth, can only tend to disgrace it. For since every religious and unbelieving sect have alike SUCCESSFULLY EMPLOYED IT IN SUPPORTING their respective tenets, and in rendering those of their adversaries contemptible; it follows, inasmuch as doctrines, which are essentially*

PART *essentially repugnant, cannot all be true; that*

I. *Ridicule is one of the most powerful engines, by which error can be maintained and established†.*

This is strong, pointed, and seems to conclude the argument as thoroughly as it concludes the section. What a pity it is, that it should have no better foundation than what the author himself owns to be in the former sentence, *a leavened lump of malice and dulness.*

† The observation of Lord SHAFTSBURY here alluded to, is to be found in his foregoing leaf, when speaking of modern zealots, he tells us, that *Whatever they think grave and solemn, they suppose must never be treated out of a grave and solemn way; though what another thinks so, they can be contented to treat otherwise, and are fond to try the test of Ridicule against any opinion besides their own.* But how the remarker should find in these words any thing concerning the support of different opinions, by the means of Ridicule, it is difficult to guess. He likewise accuses Mr. COLLINS, whom he calls *his associate*, of this gross absurdity; and perhaps he may be guilty of it. But as he has not quoted any passage, or so much as mentioned the name of the work where it is to be found; we have reason to doubt, whether he has not mistaken Mr. COLLINS, as much as he has my Lord SHAFTSBURY. But supposing Lord SHAFTSBURY and his associates to be as dull and malicious, as he has been pleased to represent them, what is it to the merits of Ridicule?

It

It is certainly true, that many religious SECT.  
sects have successfully employed Ridicule, V.  
*in rendering the tenets of their adversaries con-*

*temptible*; but how is it possible that an instrument, whose professed use is to pull down, should be employed in *supporting* any sect of religion, except there were only two sects of religion in the world, and one of them necessarily true; whereas it is possible there may be five hundred, and all, but one, false and ridiculous. Was there ever any author so weak as to fancy, that where two men of war are pelting one another, either of them proposes to mend his own rigging by the shot, which he pours into his adversary? Is the worship of VENUS or GANYMEDE at all more established by the excellent jokes, which JUVENAL has thrown at the crocodile and onion gods of the Egyptians? Or suppose a Catholic should raise the laugh ever so properly against the worship of FUM HO, and the Chinese should return it full upon St. ANTHONY of Padua; would any one be more convinced of the truth of the Chinese or Popish idolatry, than he was before? Did PASCAL's admired Ridicule of the Jesuits prove any thing towards the truth of Janse-

E nism?

PART nism? No. After all his wit, their doctrines

I. of the *grace of congruity*, and *grace of efficacy*, continue to be equally unintelligible, and equally as useless as ever: and both sides were exposed to the Ridicule of more unpassionate minds; by whose means, as VOLTAIRE observes, France was eased of a dispute that equally disgraced christianity, learning, and the human understanding\*.

Indeed when two sects, in the same country, while they appear to be contending for the truth of their several opinions, are in reality contending for power and riches; that sect, which destroys its adversary by any means, direct or sinister, by seriousness, ridicule, or blows, establishes itself as effectually as it desires; and huzzas, like a victorious ship, that has sunk its enemy; tho',

\* *On se souvient, avec quel mepris le duc d'Orleans et son ministre parlaient des querelles qu'ils appaisèrent; quel ridicule ils jetterent sur cette guerre de controverse. Ce mepris et ce ridicule ne servirent pas peu a la paix. On se lasse enfin de combattre, pour des querelles dont le monde rit,*

Siecle de Louis 14. chap. du Jansenisme.

with



# ON RIDICULE.

51

w th twenty shots in its own hull, half its  
men slain, and not a mast standing.

SECT.  
V.  


It is much to the honour of the present state of this country, that, notwithstanding the universal toleration, the liberty of the press, and the security with which all opinions may be canvassed, there is little or nothing offered tending to ridicule the religion, that is either by law established or tolerated. It has not been so always, and, I believe, it will be found, that the books and papers of Ridicule upon religious subjects, have been much more numerous at any time, between the reformation and the accession of his present majesty, than they have been during his happy reign. And the reason seems to be obvious. For, in former reigns, the factions which tore the bowels of the nation, were formed of certain religious sects, who carried creeds for their banners, differing often in the meerest trifles; which trifles however being the bond of union of each party, as well as the pretended cause of division, were magnified into matters of the greatest IMPORTANCE by their several leaders and trumpeters; so that

E 2

they

PART they became from contemptible excrescences  
 I. to be the whole, almost, of the religion of  
 the times.

In this every way polemical state of our unhappy country, when the spirit of controversy descended so low, as to excite little misses of ten years old, to pull caps about *the divine right of episcopacy*, or *the validity of lay baptism*; when it rose so high, as to make one of the greatest epic poets that any age has furnished, introduce the Almighty discoursing like a school-divine \*, and the devils amusing themselves in hell with metaphysical cunnundrums †; when the friends of peace and liberty were by turns terrified with the prospect of anarchy, from the hair-brained enthusiasm of the sectaries; and of popish tyranny, under a bigotted king. Then it was, that BUTLER, TINDAL, TRENCHARD, GORDON, and many others rose up

\* MILTON's *Paradise-Lost*, Book III.

† *Others apart sat on a hill retir'd  
 In thoughts more elevate, and reason'd high  
 Of providence, foreknowledge, will, and fate;  
 Fixt fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute;  
 And found no end, in wand'ring mazes lost.*

Book II.

to reap this fat harvest, which the heats of SECT. the times had brought to maturity; then it V. was, that Dr. SWIFT wrote his *Tale of a Tub*, to aid the serious pen of Archbishop TILLOTSON and other learned and good men, whose manner of writing was not so calculated to produce the contempt which they aimed at, and which the safety and happiness of our church and state required \*.

But of late years the persons, who have had the administration of public affairs, have found, that government can be maintained with more security by other means, than by making

\* Lord ORRERY has summed up the excellency of the *Tale of the Tub* in the following words: *Throughout the whole piece there is a vein of Ridicule and good humour, that laughs pedantry and affectation into the lowest degree of contempt; and exposes the character of JACK and PETER, in such a manner as never will be forgiven, and never can be answered.*

Remarks on Dr. SWIFT, Lett. xxiii.

It does however more than barely laugh at pedantry and affectation, which is properly the office of that sort of Ridicule, whose object is manner and action; and of which I shall treat in the second part of this essay. *The Tale of the Tub*, like *Don Quixote*, is of the argumentive kind of Ridicule, whose business is to oppose false opinions; and operates by raising up fictitious cha-

PART making a stalking-horse of religion ; so that

I. those trifling distinctions, invented and kept up to enflame the populace on either side, losing their intended effect, lost by degrees their IMPORTANCE, and by ceasing to be important, have ceased to be the objects of Ridicule. Religion is now become in England, almost † what it was at first intended to be ; not a tool for the politic and the seditious to work withal, but a matter entirely of private

acters to act in familiar occurrences in life, upon principles false and chimerical, and by representing the obvious consequences of such a proceeding, convincing the reader of the falshood and absurdity of such principles and opinions. This is called, in common language, with great propriety, *putting those opinions to the proof*; and is, of all the modes of Ridicule that ever were found out, the fairest as well as the most diverting.

† The word *almost*, although unmusical in the sentence, cannot, with a safe conscience, be left out ; because we can never be said to be *altogether* in that state of liberty and common sense, to which the constitution of this kingdom has been verging for this hundred years past, while there is any law in force to punish those, who differ in opinion from their rulers in matters merely speculative. Perhaps there are people, who will be surpris'd when they hear the word *punishment*, fancying that it has no other meaning than to burn, fine and imprison. But their surpris'e will perhaps cease, when



private concern, subject to no jurisdiction, SECT.  
but that of conscience or private opinion; V.  
which will ever be most respectable when most  
divested of worldly power and riches; and  
will ever most deserve the approbation of the  
wise and virtuous, the less noise it makes.

when they are put in mind, that to declare a man incapable of holding any place of trust or profit under the government, is often decreed in court as a punishment for very great offences: and, whilst a law subsists to inflict such a stigma upon useful subjects, who dissent from the parliamentary creed, the toleration is far from being compleat.

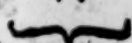
## S E C T. VI.

PATT I. **B**ESIDES philosophical truth, which is required in positions that are presented immediately to the understanding, there is a thing called FOETICAL TRUTH, which is required in those images, which are presented to the fancy, either to beautify or illustrate compositions in poetry, of which they may be called the essence. These pass commonly by the name of *allegories*, *metaphors* or *similies*; and are always to be condemned as false, whenever they present any idea to the imagination that is absurd, mean, or unsuitable.

To men of a lively and orderly fancy, to whom every word produces the idea, of which it is a sign, with distinctness and precision, every incongruity of that sort is immediately manifest; but, to those who are not blest with this faculty, which is often called *taste*, in so eminent a degree, some foreign help is necessary, in order to furnish their judgment with more perfect materials to exercise itself upon. And, of all the methods suggested by

## ON RIDICULE.

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by critics for this purpose, there is none SECT.  
quicker or surer, than one recommend in V.  
the *Spectator*, N<sup>o</sup>. 595, and that is, to   
call in the assistance of the pencil, and try  
what effect such metaphors or imagery would  
have, when exhibited upon canvass. This  
is nothing but that APPEAL FROM WORDS  
TO FACTS of which I have been hitherto  
treating; and which will be a constant de-  
tector of the false and ridiculous, whenever  
it obtrudes itself.

Suppose, for instance, the friends of the  
church of England should have a desire to  
expose the wild and absurd expressions, used  
by the growing sect of Moravians in their  
public worship. In what manner is this  
most effectually to be done?

According to my Lord SHAFTSBURY'S  
system of Ridicule, PUNCH would be em-  
ployed to sing a hymn out of their *Salt-book*  
in broken English, accompanied with a  
thorough bass upon the *Salt-box*, instead of  
an organ; and, to render it more savoury, to  
change the words here and there into others,  
for which his oratory is chiefly admired,  
While

**PART** While this was performing, the mob of  
**I.** Smithfield, and, perhaps, politer people  
 would laugh; but it would be at **PUNCH**  
 for his nastiness and monky-tricks, while  
 the brethren would escape unhurt.

This is not Ridicule, but only burlesque  
 and waggery. But if any man has a mind to  
 raise an effectual laugh at these devout pro-  
 ceedings, let him open the book at page 53,  
 and with a composed countenance, and a  
 tone of voice fit for the lesson of the day,  
 read aloud:

*Lovely side-hole take in me,  
 Let me ever be in thee;  
 O side-hole's wound, my heart and soul  
 Does pant for thy so lovely hole.  
 Lovely side-hole take in me,  
 Let me ever be in thee:  
 If I once securely fit,  
 In the lovely side-hole's split,  
 O then I for ever dwell  
 In the lovely PLEURA's cell:  
 O then I, &c.*

OR,



O R,

SECT.  
VI.

*Ye children, where do you dwell, where is  
your ground,*

*Where is the best care for such little ones found?*

*We dwell in the wound-holes, in JESU's flesh  
made,*

*The holy church cares for, and lends us her aid.*

*But will for such number of doves room be  
found,*

*In the narrow space of the holy side's wound?*

*O yes, and besides there is room for to sit,*

*In all the holes of the lamb's hands and feet.*

*What is it that in all your meetings resounds?*

*One speaks, hears, and sings here at all times  
of wounds;*

*One speaks, hears, and sings here at all times  
of wounds;*

*Wounds, wounds, again wound-holes, and no-  
thing but wounds:           &c. &c. &c.*

This is burlesque enough of itself, and  
would alone be sufficient to raise laughter in  
every one, who felt the proper force of the  
words;

PART words ; but it is as certain, at the same time,

I. that there are thousands, in whom they raise rapture and enthusiasm. From whence can this strange effect, upon a particular set of people, proceed? I make no doubt, but that it is caused by long and early habitude, which has destroyed or changed the ideas in their minds, upon this occasion, which those words naturally excite at other times, producing no image, but what is confused, indistinct, and no doubt very different in one of the society, from what it does in another. But let any engraver adorn their hymn book with a few cuts, let him draw men, women and children creeping into the side-hole, and nestling in it like wasps in a hollow tree ; and there is great reason to believe, that there are none of the faithful, however damaged in their understanding, but would see the absurdity and nastiness of this their allegory ; and would either laugh or be angry, according as pride happened to be more or less predominant in their several constitutions.

It is not the performance alone of those High German artists, that ought to be examined by this rule; it is a certain test for the soundness of every piece of poetry whatsoever; but a test so severe, that the best of them all will sometimes shrink at it. There are many descriptions in the great MILTON, which pass very currently in blank verse, and yet would make but a poor or disgusting appearance in colours, and some of them entirely incapable of delineation.

Perhaps HOMER himself may not be, upon every occasion, exempt from this charge. His description of NEPTUNE's progress from Somothrace to Æge (240 miles) in four strides \*, has been much admired by some critics

\* ΤΡΙΣ ΜΕΝ ΟΡΕΖΑΤ' ΙΩΝ, ΤΟ ΔΕ ΤΕΤΡΑΤΟΝ  
ΙΚΕΤΟ ΤΕΚΜΩΡ  
ΑΙΓΑΣ. Iliad, 12.

*From realm to realm three ample strides he took,  
And at the fourth the distant Æge shook.* POPE.

Madam DACIER has omitted this in her translation; for which Mr. POPE condemns her; not for want of fidelity, but want of taste, in passing over a stroke of poetry

**PART** critics for its sublimity ; but it is certainly not

**I.** in the power of **APELLES** or **RAPHAEL** to paint a God bounding across the **Ægean** sea, in any manner, that he shall not appear as like a man skipping over a kennel, as one egg is like another. An image altogether mean and ungodlike.

Wherein then consists the sublimity of this passage ? Probably in words only ; and that any effort of the mind, to turn those words into imagery, would give it, instead of pleasure, that uneasiness, which it suffers during the restless flumbers of a fever. The human mind cannot create any thing ; it can only reflect, like a looking-glass, but a looking-glass where the images remain after the objects are removed : and the pleasure we receive from the works of art, either in po-

etry that did honour to her author. **LONGINUS**, however, seems rather to side with her, as in his commendation of **HOMER**'s Neptune, he has quoted some lines that precede, and some that follow this passage, without taking notice of it. So great a contrariety of sentiment amongst celebrated judges, ought to convince us of the insufficiency of meer **TASTE** ; and the necessity of looking for some rule, by which it may be directed.

etry



etry or painting, is greater or less, accord-  
 ing as the images produced by the artist do  
 more or less resemble those contained in  
 this repository †: Or, as POPE says, SECT. VI.

*True wit is nature to advantage drest,  
 Which oft was thought, but ne'er so well  
 exprest.  
 Something whose truth, convinc'd, at sight  
 we find,  
 That gives us back the image of our mind.*

And the greatest poet, whenever he mistakes  
 the bounds of his art so much, as to endea-

† Mr. ADDISON, whose papers upon *The Pleasures of the Imagination* deserve great encomiums, has, nevertheless, lost much of the consistency which might have appeared on that subject, by not establishing a constant attachment to TRUTH, as the leading and inseparable principle in all the works of art. For instance, he says, N<sup>o</sup>. 421. *Those different allusions are but so many different manners of similitude; and, that they may please the imagination, the likeness ought to be very exact, OR very agreeable; as we love to see a picture where the resemblance is just, or the posture and air graceful.*

He is here as unfortunate in his illustration, as in his principle; for the *agreeable*, in those cases, cannot be separated from the *exact*: and a posture, in painting, must be a *just resemblance* of what is graceful in nature, before it can hope to be esteem'd graceful.

your

PART your to represent to others, what the eye

I. hath not seen, nor the ear heard; altho' he may flatter himself, like BAYES, that his attempt is great, yet the application of the rule, suggested in this Section \*, will never

\* I suspect that HORACE had an eye to this method of criticism in the commencement of his art of poetry.

*Humano capiti cervicem pictor equinam  
Jungere si velit, et varias inducere plumas,  
Undique collatis membris, ut turpiter atrum  
Desinat in piscem mulier formosa superne,  
Spectatum admissi risum teneatis amici?  
Credite, Pisones, isti tabulæ fore librum  
Persimilem, cujus, velut ægri somnia, vane  
Fingentur species; ut nec pes, nec caput uni  
Reddatur formæ. Pictoribus atque poetis  
Quidlibet audendi semper fuit æqua potestas.  
Scimus; et hanc veniam petimusque damusque vicissim,  
Sed non ut placidis coeant immitia; non ut  
Serpentes avibus gementur, tigribus agni.*

Here, as in many other places, that excellent critic illustrates the beauties and defects of poetry, by allusions made to painting; which he is generally thought to do, only because poetry happen'd to be his theme at that time; and that, had he been to treat of painting, he would have *vice versa* illustrated painting, by allusions made to the operations of the sister art. There may be perhaps, another reason assigned that may make the allusions in the case actually before us

more

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never fail to convince the judicious of its  
being monstrous and ridiculous.

SECT.  
VI.

more proper and conducive than if the case were revers'd. The use of allusions, as has been already hinted in this Essay, is to establish obscure or dubious truths, by the aid of similar truths that are more obvious. Lines and colours are of a more determined nature, and strike the mind more immediately than words; which, before they can produce any effect, must be form'd by the mind itself, into pictures; and consequently require a more tedious, and more difficult process. This HORACE himself expresses, in another part of the same work, where speaking of theatrical representations, which are a mixture of poetry and painting, he says,

*Segnius irritant animos demissa per aurem,  
Quam quæ sunt oculis subjecta fidelibus, et quæ  
Ipse sibi tradit spectator.*

Upon this consideration it is, that he makes use of a similitude borrowed from the art of painting, which condemns the extravagancies and incongruities of certain poets, by shewing that the like would be in a painter unpardonable and ridiculous.

The hopes of finding something to confirm my conjecture concerning the meaning of this passage of HORACE, induced me to look into many of his commentators, particularly DACIER and SANADON, but I found nothing there that pointed towards it. I observed however at the same time, that those learned Frenchmen, in their translations, had entirely passed over the word

F

*aqua,*

PART *æqua*, which is join'd to *poteslas* in the 10th line; and

II. that the former understood *petimusque damusque vicissim*,  
 to relate to poets and critics. In this he appears to have very much mistaken his author's meaning; as there had been no mention at all of critics, and that it would have been very absurd in HORACE to have said, that critics claim'd a right to boldness and invention, that put them upon a level with poets. I will therefore endeavour to give a general sense of those 13 lines, in a manner that will make them consistent with the truth of things, with one another, and probably with the intention of the author.

“ If to a human face a painter should join the neck  
 “ of a horse, with wings of various colours; collecting  
 “ in like manner, the other members from different  
 “ animals, so that the breast of a fair woman should  
 “ terminate in a fish's tail: would not you, who are  
 “ connoisseurs, think the spectacle extremely ridiculous?  
 “ And yet, believe me, nothing can be more  
 “ akin to this picture, than a poem, whose unaccountable  
 “ images, like a sick man's dreams, are such,  
 “ that no one part has any manner of relation to  
 “ another. Painters and poets have always had an  
 “ equal right to be bold in their compositions.  
 “ This we know, and it is by this equal right, that we  
 “ poets must not dare to write, what a painter would  
 “ not dare to paint; nor does the painter, on the other  
 “ hand, expect any indulgence, but what he is willing  
 “ to grant to his brother poet. But this indulgence  
 “ never extends itself to those, who lose sight of nature;  
 “ nor allows either of the artists to introduce  
 “ the dove sporting with the serpent, nor the lamb  
 “ with the tiger.”

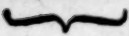


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A N  
E S S A Y  
O N  
R I D I C U L E.  
P A R T II.

**L**AUGHTER, as I have before observed, *is the consequence of Ridicule*, from whence it receives its name; but it is proper to take notice, that it is only a symptom, and not its distinguishing character. For laughter is produced upon many occasions, where nothing like Ridicule is applied. A slap on the face may raise a laugh in the by-standers; but if they were to burst their sides, it has no more pretension to Ridicule, than it has to *pa-*

PART *thetic eloquence* \*. It is reported of a man

II.  once eminent for his love of the public, that he was never known to laugh in the course of his life, but once; and that was, upon seeing his brother fall and break his arm. And there is nothing more common, than to observe people in health and affluence, laugh and sneer at the bodily infirmities, weakness of intellects, thread-bare cloaths, and other marks of the distress or poverty of those, who accidentally come in their way. Is this Ridicule? Those refin'd philosophers, who have discover'd in Man *moral feelings* and *instincts*, which are to serve him as a *criterion* of right and wrong, and are satisfied to receive this into the number; much good may it do them. There is great reason to believe, that JUVENAL would join with me in saying, *Hæc nostri pars PESSIMA sensus*; and that there are few greater symptoms of moral turpitude in human nature. And yet my Lord SHAFTSBURY's antagonist, by making *Contempt* and *Ridicule* synonymous terms, has employed some pages of his book in proving, that this inhuman folly can never

\* See the last Note of Sect. II.

be the test of truth †. Men of the best PART  
 sense will never fail to confound themselves II.  
 and others, when they are not at pains, by  
 definitions and examples, to ascertain the  
 meaning of their terms. When we see Ri-  
 dicule understood to be *pathetic eloquence* in  
 one page, in another *contempt*; why not per-  
 jury, a goose, a gridiron, or a chest of  
 drawers? By such skilful management any  
 one thing may be proved to have none of  
 its own properties, but all the properties of  
 any thing else, to the great advancement of  
 knowledge.

A man who even laughs at folly or vice,  
 which are certainly the objects of pity or de-  
 testation, to sound and liberal minds, gives  
 us as bad a sample of his morals as of his  
 understanding. How comes it then, that a  
 Ridicule of those very follies and vices is fol-  
 lowed by a laugh or smile from the most  
 humane? To me it appears very plain, that  
 the laugh, in this case, is not a laugh arising  
 from the contempt of the person or thing  
 ridiculed; but a laugh of pleasure, from the

† *Essays on the Characteristics*, Sect. V. at the be-  
 ginning.

PART

II.

are some philosophers, who have derived laughter from pride, and from the pleasure which we receive in comparing our own strength with the infirmities of others. I know not upon what they ground this opinion, and it is foreign to my present subject to enter deep into the enquiry. But I am thoroughly convinced, from many observations, external and internal, that the motives I have here assign'd are true in the case of Ridicule, and perhaps it may serve as a hint for further discoveries. Why should we indulge ourselves in meer conjectures, to the disadvantage of the human heart? Perhaps the sneer and laugh of contempt which we so often with abhorrence observe, is not natural; but only affected, and put on to shew superior parts and discernment. It is most commonly to be seen, not so much among the proud and ill-natured, as among the empty, the half-bred, and the half-witted; who I fancy are often led into this mean and monkey-like practice, by hearing men of acknowledg'd wit celebrated for *laughing at persons and things*; which they take literally, not knowing that by these words is meant,

*exposing*



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*exposing those persons and things in a new* PART  
*and artful manner,* and thereby exciting laugh- II.  
 ter in all those whom they thus entertain,  
 while they themselves preserve the greatest  
 seriousness and modesty of countenance.

Thus much was necessary to premise, before we enter upon the second kind of Ridicule, which consists in the bare *representation of what is improper in manners or actions*. It may be stiled, SIMPLE, DIRECT, or UNREFLECTED RIDICULE; and if it comes under the description of the *art, which shews that to be ridiculous which is imagined to be so*, it is only by bringing the ridiculous out of obscurity, and placing it in open day-light. And, indeed, as POPE says,

*Vice is a creature of so vile a mien,  
 That, to be hated, needs but to be seen.*

For this sort of Ridicule is one of those which ARISTOTLE, in his *Poetics*, calls *mimic arts*; and deriving all its merit from its obvious likeness, to what it proposes to represent, has not the least pretence to be re-

**PART** ceived as a test of truth; with whatsoever  
**II.** usefulness it may be otherwise attended. It  
 may be divided into several branches; but chiefly into the NARRATIVE, GRAPHIC, and DRAMATIC. I shall exemplify all these separately; beginning with the GRAPHIC, or what is produced by the painter.

And of all those artists, who have employed their pencils in representing what they thought ridiculous in the manners of men, I know of none, who deserves to be mentioned upon this occasion, but the incomparable HOGARTH. Others there are, Dutch, Flemish, French, and Italians, who have painted life in all its calamitous circumstances, of poverty, oppression, bodily sickness, and deformity. But ARISTOTLE \*, and common sense have long ago told us, that these things are not ridiculous; and to all, but the unfeeling, are the objects of com-

\* Η ΔΕ ΚΩΜΩΔΙΑ ΕΣΤΙΝ, ὥΣΠΕΡ ΕΠΙΟΜΕΝ, ΜΙΜΗΣΙΣ ΦΑΤΛΟΤΕΡΩΝ ΜΕΝ, ΟΥ ΜΕΝΤΟΙ ΚΑΤΑ ΠΑΣΑΝ ΚΑΚΙΑΝ, ΑΛΛΑ ΤΟΥ ΑΙΣΧΡΟΥ ΕΣΤΙ ΤΟ ΓΕΛΟΙΟΝ ΜΟΡΙΟΝ. ΤΟ ΓΑΡ ΓΕΛΟΙΟΝ ΕΣΤΙΝ ΑΜΑΡΤΗΜΑ ΤΙ, ΚΑΙ ΑΙΣΧΟΣ ΑΝΩΔΥΝΟΝ, ΚΑΙ ΟΥ ΦΘΑΡΤΙΚΟΝ. *Arist. Poetic. cap. 5.*

passion, and not of laughter. It was re-  
served for our ingenious countryman, to ex-  
pose upon immortal canvass the fashionable  
follies, vices and affectations of his cotem-  
poraries. He has gone still farther, and by  
producing his representations in serieses, and  
shewing the frightful, tho natural tendency  
of those follies, has administer'd one of the  
most practical incitements to virtue, and ful-  
filled the most material duty of a moral  
philosopher ; and that by a language, which  
all men understand, and which makes the  
quickest and strongest impresson upon their  
minds \*.

PART  
II.

This is employing a very extraordinary  
talent in a way, which greatly deserves the  
thanks of the public. Let us see next,  
whether this talent, like many other good  
things, may not be abused in its turn ; and  
render'd hurtful to society, by ridiculing  
those actions which are innocent or praise-  
worthy.

\* See the last Section of Part I. with the notes upon  
it.

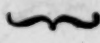
## PART

## II.

But when we consider the nature of this sort of Ridicule, ever so slightly, it will appear, that whenever it takes effect at all, it is always from its being *true Ridicule*; that is, *giving a representation of what is truly ridiculous*. And such is its simplicity, that there never can be any fallacy attending it, except, by the means of a downright lie, in attributing an action or circumstance, in itself ridiculous, to a person, to whom it does not belong.

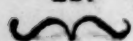
For instance, suppose Mr. HOGARTH, to expose the odiousness of drunkenness and quarrelling in men of important stations, should paint two magistrates in their furbrowns sprawling on the floor, and battering one another, with countenances that breathed *scoundrel* and *rascal* as emphatically as if the words flowed in labels out of their mouths; should HOGARTH, I say, delineate such a midnight conversation, with all the natural circumstances of torn cravats, spilt claret, and broken tobacco-pipes, which his lively fancy would presently suggest to him, the piece could not fail of being useful as well as comical. But should he, to serve the



the vile purposes of a party, or to gratify a PART  
 private grudge, (I beg his pardon for the sup- II.  
 position,) should he write under these figures,   
*This is Mr.----- and this is Mr.-----* using  
 the names of two men most eminent for  
 their sobriety and discretion; or, if instead  
 of writing, he should insert the features of  
 those worthy magistrates, the general Ridi-  
 cule would be still as just as it was before;  
 and the artist would receive, at York or  
 Carlisle, his usual tribute of praise: but  
 they, who were better instructed in the affairs  
 of London, would be shocked at the per-  
 formance, and would withdraw from the  
 author that esteem, which the rest of his con-  
 duct had so justly acquired.

This, I will venture to say, is the plain  
 state of the case, with regard to the abuses,  
 that may happen in all the different species  
 of REPRESENTATIVE Ridicule. And it is par-  
 ticularly the case of SOCRATES, which has  
 been so often quoted to the disadvantage of  
 Ridicule in general, altho most unjustly;  
 as it will easily appear, that SOCRATES  
 fell not a sacrifice, as is pretended, to  
 wit

PART wit and Ridicule, but to falshood and mis-  
II. representation.



Those who are acquainted with the character of that great man ; his moderation and universal benevolence ; his justness and elegance of thought ; his courage and unshaken fidelity in the defence of his country ; and his constant endeavour to render all men as moderate, as virtuous, and as useful members of society as himself : must be satisfied that such a character had nothing in it, that was ridiculous, and that it was entirely out of the reach of Ridicule. Of this the conduct of ARISTOPHANES was likewise a proof. He was very sensible of the difficulties, he had to encounter ; he knew, that his talents could not be employed with success against any thing, that was not ridiculous in itself ; and therefore took advantage of the ignorance of the multitude, already prejudiced by the heathen priests, and the leaders of a faction ; and exhibited to them a SOCRATES of his own creation, ridiculous to an extreme degree ; and in every respect the opposite of him, whom it was said to represent. If the event of this representation proved fatal to  
that

that excellent philosopher, we must blame PART  
 the villany, not the wit of the poet; and we II.  
 must not lay to the charge of Ridicule a mis-  
 fortune, which will equally attend the most  
 serious indictment, when it happens to be  
 founded upon facts, that are either feigned or  
 unfairly stated.

So much for the GRAPHIC and DRAMA-  
 TIC \*.

Of the NARRATIVE Ridicule there are in-  
 stances in the *Characters* of THEOPHRASTUS,  
 LA BRUYERE, PETRONIUS, *Memoirs of the*  
*house of Brandenburg*, &c.

\* Under the article of *dramatic Ridicule*, may be properly put those philological pieces of Ridicule, which are meant to expose affectation, awkwardness, and bad taste in writing and discourse, and which have been often, and successfully employed by the best critics. Of this sort are the *Lexiphanes* and other pieces of LUCIAN; the *Limosin* and other chapters of RABELAIS; SWIFT's *Memoirs of P. P.* His *Trritical essay on the faculties of the mind*; *Polite conversation*; *Meditations on a broom-stick*, &c. and, like all the different species of this kind of Ridicule, are capable of being misapplied, by having the names of persons affixed to them, whom perhaps they resemble not at all, or only in part.

These

PART These species of mimic Ridicule are  
 II. sometimes to be found single, sometimes  
 compounded; and often acquire a new name  
 by the composition. As,

The THEATRICAL Ridicule, which is a compound of the *graphic* and *dramatic*; the actor performing the function both of the painter and poet. This sometimes likewise receives the narrative Ridicule; as, when an actor, in the character of Sir *John Falstaff*, gives a description of his recruits in his march to Coventry.

Sometimes the NARRATIVE Ridicule, is interspersed with the DRAMATIC, as in the *Trimalchio* of PETRONIUS, *Payfan parvenu* of Marivaux, *Joseph Andrews*, *Pompey the little*, &c. †

It

† *Don Quixote*, for some things, may be ranked amongst those *representations of real life*, as in the character of *Sancho*, and others. There are likewise strokes of the *argumentative Ridicule* in the character of *Parson Adams*, and other characters in those instructing novels written by Mr. FIELDING. The intention of the present *Essay*, is not to enumerate all the different  
 ways

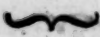


It would be endless to relate the various PART  
shapes in which this REPRESENTATIVE Ridi- II.  
cule has appeared; but they all agree so much  
in the general character of being *pictures of  
life and manners*, and are so much the same  
in their nature and properties, that there does  
not appear occasion for more than one short  
section to explain the whole theory of  
them. It is a sort of Ridicule, that may be  
of use in giving lively impressions of known  
truths; but whoever is at the pains to prove,  
that it can never be a test of truth, will  
have the pleasure of arguing without the  
trouble of an opponent; since it never was  
applied in subjects of speculation, and, even  
in its own province of representing the de-  
formities of life and manners, cannot prove  
its own justness, with regard to the ap-  
plication, but by extraneous evidence and  
assistance.

There is reason however to suspect, from  
several passages in the *Essays upon the charac-*

ways, in which the different kinds and species of Ridi-  
cule may be mixed, but only to give some general hints  
of those principles, by which a more exact discussion  
may be made.

*teristicks,*

PART *teristicks*, that, while the author speaks of  
II. Ridicule in general, he only means this  
 MIMIC sort, as in page 46. *Again, it may be observed, that the consequences of Ridicule, with regard to speculative instruction and enquiry, are of a very different nature from those which relate to morals and action: to the first it must ever be an enemy; but to the latter it may be an enemy or a friend, according as it is fairly or dishonestly applied.* If he means, I say, only the MIMIC Ridicule, his assertion has been sufficiently confirmed and exemplified in this section. The subject is too simple to admit of any difference of opinion concerning it; and cannot, in itself, incur either praise or blame. The only Ridicule, whose legality is worth the disputing, is that which has been treated of in the first part of this *Essay*. It was that alone, which could give rise to this controversy; being a weapon often used by the learned and ingenious, who never seem in fact, as has been observed by Lord SHAFTSBURY, to have questioned its lawfulness, unless when it happened to be in the enemy's hands.

To

To conclude. It has been often recom-  
 mended to those, who take upon them the  
 instruction of mankind, that they should  
 convey their lessons in such a way, as might  
 render them agreeable as well as useful: tho'  
 this was meant, like putting sugar into a  
 bitter potion, only to render it more palata-  
 ble, and to be more willingly swallowed by  
 the patient; without its being looked upon  
 as any part of the medicine itself. But, if  
 what has been set forth in the first part of  
 this *Essay*, with regard to the ingredients  
 which compose Ridicule and pleasantry in  
 writing, is found to be true; if *appeals to*  
*experience* are the best test of truth; if those  
 appeals are *least subject to fallacy*, when  
 made to *facts the most vulgar and familiar*;  
 if in the most *serious* questions, such wherein  
 the welfare of mankind is chiefly interested,  
*the entertainment rises in proportion to the*  
*familiarity of the known truths*, by the appli-  
 cation of which any falshood in those  
*important* points is detected: if, I say, these  
 things are so, then it will be easy to perceive  
 a more then accidental connection betwixt

G

the

PART  
II

PART the *utile* and the *dulce*; it will be easy to  
 II. perceive, that in speculative, as well as in  
 active life, *the ways of Wisdom are really*  
*ways of pleasantness*; and that a true philo-  
 sopher, that is, a man of candour, sense  
 and knowledge, has a better chance than  
 ordinary of improving the understandings  
 of those with whom he converses, at the very  
 instant that he makes them laugh.

F I N I S.



A  
L E T T E R

TO THE  
RIGHT HONOURABLE

THE  
EARL of ———

Concerning the AFFAIR of  
Elizabeth Canning.

By a CLERGYMAN.



L O N D O N,  
Printed for T. SEDDON at *Homer's* Head in the  
*Poultry*. MDCCLIII.  
[Price one Shilling.]

LETTER

TO THE

RIGHT HONOURABLE

THE

EARL OF



Elizabeth Canning

LETTER CYMAN



LONDON

Printed by J. DODD, at the

Printers, in Pall Mall

THE  
EDITOR'S *Advertisement.*

**T**HE Nobleman to whom this Letter was address'd, thinking it of general Utility, has permitted it to be printed. And, as he is sensible of the Regard which the Gentleman who wrote it pays to the Publick Good, he is under no Apprehension of his disapproving of the Publication, tho done without his Consent.

For the Ease and Satisfaction of the Reader, the Editor has put References, at the bottom of the Pages, to the several Passages in the Pamphlets alluded to in this Letter, and has likewise inserted some whole Paragraphs from the News-Papers, &c. that are now difficult to be met with.

EDITOR'S ADDRESS



A  
LETTER  
TO THE  
RIGHT HONOURABLE  
THE  
EARL of \_\_\_\_\_

My LORD,

I Hope your Lordship received the letter I sent last Friday, by *Richard* along with Lady \_\_\_\_\_'s tea and dimmity. I should have given you then, as you probably expected, my opinion concerning the affair of *Elizabeth Canning*; but I fancy the first sight of this, which, if I may believe the heap of memorandums that lye upon the table before me, will have more the size of a book than a letter, will make a very plausible excuse for my delay. Indeed, my dear Lord, there is nothing I undertake with more alacrity and chearfulness

B than

than whatever tends to your amusement, especially when I perceive it to be connected with your instruction, which was many years my sole employment, and is still part of the duty of my peculiar function: but my eyes are now so weak, that I can neither read or write any thing without frequent intermissions.

The story, as your Lordship observes, is very puzzling, and so it appears to the inhabitants of this great city, where it has been the universal subject of controversy for many weeks, and the majority seem still to be of opinion that the first account was the truth, if we may judge by the late proceedings of the grand jury, of which your news papers I suppose have given you the particulars.

It is but lately, that I myself have had any knowledge of this affair. The melancholy event which brought me to town, hindered me from attending to what was doing in it, and perhaps I should to this hour have remained in ignorance, had not my attention been awakened by seeing a  
pam-

pamphlet advertised on the subject by Mr. *Fielding*.

Your Lordship knows the value I set upon every thing that is written by that author, who has succeeded so well in every subject he has undertaken, either of business or pleatantry; and I with great reason expected one or other of these from the twelpenny worth I saw advertised. And, perhaps there are none of his performances that more discover the ingenuity of the man of wit, the distinctness of the lawyer, or the politeness and candour of the gentleman.

But while I admired the stile and composition of this pamphlet, and the ingenious, and at the same time unadorned method, in which Mr. *Fielding* defended the cause of *Canning*, I could not help being surprized to find upon what slight grounds he and many other sensible men, had founded their belief of her veracity; and that they should be satisfied with evidence that seems to be in no manner adequate to the nature of the facts meant to

be proved by it: especially when a life is concerned, of which our laws and customs are in most cases extremely tender.

It is reported about town, as you may see by the news papers, that there are several evidences to the *alibi* of the gypsy *Squires*, and other counter evidences: but as I know nothing certain concerning them, I shall confine myself, in the opinion you do me the honour to ask, to the proofs that were produced before and at the trial of *Squires*, as they appear in the *Sessions paper*, *Mr. Fielding's state of the case*, and other *papers* published by the friends of *Canning*, not thinking any other proof necessary to convince those who are unprejudiced that her relation is false. Yet in doing this I should be sorry to be suspected of meaning any reflection upon the Justices, Judges, or Jury who concurred in the condemnation of *Squires*; since if I should prove beyond doubt my whole assertion, it will amount to no more than to shew the power of prepossession upon honest, disinterested and compassionate



fionate minds, and how cautious we ought to be in allowing any degree of weight to personal credit, and character, in opposition to the general evidence of things.

Mr. *Fielding* very candidly owns, that there is the *highest degree of improbability* attending the circumstances related by *Elizabeth Canning*, and only insists upon their *not amounting to an impossibility*. He is too much a philosopher, and too much a master of language to mean any more by a fact's being *possible*, than that it implies no contradiction in itself, and in that sense no doubt the story of *Canning* is *possible*; and so it would have been if she had gone a little farther, and said she had been dead and buried during the time she was missing. For this is *possible*, and all that we could object to the relation of it is, that it is extremely *unusual* for dead people to return to life, and therefore we are not warranted to believe it without some proof *unusually* strong.

Thus to bring a fact within the compass of possibility, there is nothing required but

that it should not contradict itself; but to make it probable, it is likewise required that it should not be contradictory to ordinary experience: for in proportion to the several degrees in which it is removed from common experience, it acquires an appearance of falshood, and to entitle it to belief, must be supported by evidence apparently true, to as great or greater degree than the fact which it means to prove, is apparently false.

This, your Lordship knows, is the general and leading principle in all enquiries concerning probable evidence; and upon this principle therefore give me leave to examine, first the story of *Canning*, and then the proof of it, weighing one against the other.

First, as to the story itself, it is so far from being like any thing that was ever heard or seen before, that to relate it as a truth, looks like an insult upon the common sense of mankind, as will appear to any one, who will try to answer the following queries.

Was

Was it ever known that any plurality of human creatures were actuated by the same kind of delirium, or ever concurred unanimously for any time in the same passion, caprice, or unaccountable whim? or was it ever known that any plurality of human creatures ever acted conjunctly but from vulgar and obvious motives of interest, safety, or pleasure?

To be more particular, was it ever known that two footpads, after having committed a robbery for which they were both liable to be hanged, instead of flying from the watch, or *battering the skull of the robbed person with their clubs*, to prevent the appearance in judgment against them, ever made the robbed person a partner in their flight?

Was it ever known that two ruffians after having committed a robbery, and as they had great reason to believe a murder\*, did ever persist in carrying

\* We apprehend the author alludes to her being knocked down and continuing some hours in a fainting fit; which, to ignorant men, and in the dark, must bear a very great resemblance to death.

or dragging the carcase of the murdered person ten miles, with much fatigue and hazard of being met; without its being possible for imagination to suggest any benefit, they could propose to themselves by this enterprize?

Was it ever read in any of the records of iniquity, that an old bawd and her associates were so ignorant of their own trade, as to think of winning a young girl to the ways of lewdness by hunger and cold; or to raise the price of her beauty by starving her black in the face?

Was it ever known that a number of people, no less than nine\*, of bad characters, and equally involved in guilt which already amounted to felony, and was verging every hour towards murder, were so quiet and unanimous in their cruel proceedings for the space of 28 days?

Was it ever known that such a number of wretches ever chose, for the scene of such a tragedy, a room opening into the kitchen of a public bawdy house, upon a most

\* See Mr. *Fielding's* pamphlet, p. 45.



public highway, with a horsepond under its window, without any guard, or the smallest attention to the prisoner, whose dying groan might have brought them all to the gallows?

Was it ever known that a whole set of people guilty of such crimes, remained quietly to be seized by the officers of justice, two days after they knew their guilt was discovered; and knew at the same time that the badness of their characters would make the slightest evidence be sufficient for their conviction?

Any one of the circumstances, alluded to in the foregoing queries, would be sufficient to throw an air of falsehood upon a story, altho' likely in every other particular. What shall we say, then, of a story which is composed altogether of such circumstances? Nothing, but that either the circumstances are false, or that God Almighty has created a set of people at *Enfield Wash*, totally different in all their desires, fears, passions, and apprehensions, from the rest of mankind.

I say

I say nothing of the improbability of the girl's returning ten miles, through a train of open inns, and gentlemens houses, without seeking relief from her hunger, rest for her weakness, or protection from her murderers, who she had the strongest reason to believe were hard in pursuit of her; because, there are found such particularities of temper, and understanding in particular persons, as to account for almost any deviation in them from those general laws of human nature, by which large societies are influenced with much certainty and uniformity.

For a like reason I will omit troubling your Lordship, with a repetition of the various physical improbabilities, which you have already been informed of by several of the pamphlets I have sent you, particularly by Mr. *Dodd's*; that I may come to a new set of improbabilities, that have been hitherto overlooked. These are not, like the rest, improbabilities, arising from what *Canning* told of her story, but from what she did not tell.

To

To explain what I mean by this, it is necessary, that I should give you a few lines upon the theory of lying; an art, of which, in your most infant years, you never knew the practice. And surely, if a man were to thank the Giver of all good, for any one blessing more than another, it ought to be for having bestowed upon him a heart utterly un-inclined to deceit, with an understanding to conceive the miserable consequences of it. For of all the trades under the sun, that of a liar, who expects to be believed, is the most difficult. This arises from many causes, but I shall only mention one, as it is necessary for my present purpose: and that is the difficulty of managing with regard to circumstances in general; which it is equally dangerous to insert, or to let alone. If a lie is made circumstantial, with the names and descriptions of persons, places, dates, and other furniture, it will be plausible and gain immediate credit; but then every one of those circumstances, which at first gave it authority,

authority, may administer means of tracing, and discovering its falshood.

If to avoid this, the relater gives no names of persons, places, or particularities, the story will justly be look'd upon as a lie from the beginning.

Upon this principle arises those queries concerning the story of *Canning*, which I hinted above, such as,

How came she to be so bare in her relation of the various incidents, that must have happen'd between *Moorfields* and *Enfield*; during which journey, there must have been many things both said and done by the two ruffians she described? To answer this, she has told us, she was in a fit; and perhaps it had been prudent in her to have said, her fit continued all the time she remained in *Wells's* house. If she had, it would have only made a new physical oddity, to be accounted for by Mr. *Dodd*, and I should have had no more questions of this sort to ask. But unhappily she has not left herself that means of evasion.

How



How came it then, that she liv'd 28 days in *Wells's* house, without being able to give the least account of what pass'd in it: altho' she had an opportunity, through a large hole, to see and hear every thing that was done in the kitchen; a place which, at that time of the year, must have been the most frequented in the house, and where there must have always been light to discover to her their motions, while the darkness of the hay-loft would always take away all fear of her curiosity being observ'd?

How comes it, that she gave no account of *Fortune Natus* and his wife *Sarah*, who, by the evidence of *V. Hall*, still urged to be true by her and her friends, lay every night in that kitchen?

To abridge the enquiry, and reduce it to a shorter catechism. What happen'd to *Elizabeth Canning*, during the six hours and a half that she was upon the road betwixt *Moorfields* and *Enfield*? Her own account will inform your Lordship:  
NOTHING.

What

What happen'd in the whole hour she remain'd in mother *Wells's* kitchen? Next to NOTHING.

What happen'd to her during the 28 days that she was confined in mother *Wells's* house? NOTHING.

What happen'd to her during the six hours that she was upon the road from *Enfield* to her mother's house? NOTHING.

Never sure was there a history that stood less in need of abridgment. But altho' we should muster out a catalogue of improbabilities attending this affair, more numerous than that of the stars, still, as Mr. *Fielding* very justly observes, there is no impossibility in it; and altho' utterly incredible in itself, may become the object of belief, by proper evidence, that may make the belief of its being true, more easy than the belief of its being false.

Accordingly we find, that some of *Canning's* advocates have endeavoured to oppose improbability against improbability; and have urged, that supposing her story  
to

to be false, we are put to as great a difficulty to account for her motives, as we are to account for those of *Squires*, and her associates, when we suppose it to be true.

This proceeds, in great measure, from the superficial, and hear-say manner, in which they receive the story from one another, without looking narrowly into the original and authentick accounts of it.

It would be extremely diverting to your Lordship, to hear some of those good people, puzzling themselves with difficulties of their own raising; and asking questions, which can admit of no answers, but what have much the air of cross purposes. For instance,

*How could Canning be at mother Wells's house upon any other occasion, without Wells, and the rest, being able to give an account of her, when it was their interest so to do?*

*Answer.* She never had been in *Wells's* house.

*If she never had been in Wells's house, how came she so exactly to describe it?*

*Answer.* She did not describe it at all.

*How could she fix upon a place so far from home, and where it appears she never had been before?*

*Answer.* She did not fix upon it at all.

*How could a young girl of a good character, be so wantonly cruel, as to form a design, of taking away the lives of so many people, who had never injured her?*

*Answer.* She never had any design against them, or their lives.

*How could so young, and simple a girl contrive so artful a story?*

*Answer.* It is not an artful, but on the contrary, an exceeding stupid story. An artful story, is such a story as *Tom Jones*, where the incidents are so various, and yet so consistent with themselves, and with nature, that the more the reader is acquainted with nature, the more he is deceived into a belief of its being true; and is with difficulty recall'd from that belief  
by



by the author's confession from time to time of its being all a fiction. But what is there plausible in the adventures of *Enfield Wash*? What is there strange or poetically fancied in the incidents of robbing, knocking down—cry'd out murder—stopt my mouth with a handkerchief—you bitch, why don't you go faster?—carrying to a bawdy house—offer of fine cloaths—cut your throat if you stir? Such is the variety of these incidents, which owe all their strangeness to the senseless manner in which they have been, with respect to time and place, jumbled together.

There is nothing *surprising* in such stories, except their meeting with any degree of belief; and that surprise commonly ceases, whenever we set ourselves coolly to examine into their origin, and trace them to their fountain head.

A wild *Indian*, suddenly landed in *England*, would think the first house he saw of four stories high, a work more than human. But after standing by a bricklayer for half an hour, and seeing

C

that

that this stupendous fabric was mounted up only by laying one brick quietly by the side of another, his wonder ceases, and, instead of four stories, he would not be surpris'd at a house of four and twenty.

Let us therefore, my Lord, endeavour to follow the affair of *Canning*, brick by brick, and see whether we cannot, if not truly, at least probably and easily, account for every step of her conduct, and likewise for all the belief that attended her relation, without being obliged to give the least credit to any one circumstance contain'd in it; each of which, as I have already shewn, carries the word L I E, in great letters upon its forehead.

In doing this I shall distinguish, by a different character, what I relate as certain facts, from those conjectures of my own that are necessary for their connection; that you may yourself judge how simple and few those conjectures are, and that I may not seem to impose my own personal credit and opinion upon  
 I  
 your

your Lordship, while I am endeavouring to inspire you with a diffidence for personal credit and opinion in general.

First, then, it is certain that *E. Canning* was missing from the 1st of January at nine 'till the 29th at ten o'clock at night, when she came to her mother's house. Where she was during this interval of time, or in what manner employed, we do not pretend to have discover'd, for if that could be done our conjectures would be lost in certainty, and there would be an end of all reasoning upon the subject. But hitherto no intelligence of that sort has been receiv'd. In the mean time it is sufficient, that there are various ways of employing a month, besides walking up and down in mother *Wells's* hay-loft. And if my good friend Sir ———, and the Doctor, should insist upon its being as difficult to conceive her being any where else, as to believe the truth of what she relates; and that no conjecture can account for the miserable state in which, it is said, she return'd; it may

not be amiss to hint to them that there are such distempers as lyings-in and miscarriages, to which young servant-maids of eighteen are very much subject; distempers that will hold them as long, and reduce them as low as has been related of *E. Canning*, especially if attended and nursed in the manner we may easily suppose her to have been. It may not be amiss to hint, that thirteen shillings and six-pence, with the sale of a gown and pair of stays, is hardly more than sufficient to defray the expences of such an operation; even altho' no part of it was expended in a christening, a wet nurse, or a coffin, which, not to continue any idea of horror in your Lordship's imagination, might have been all provided by that most humane institution, the Foundling-Hospital. Our friends may perhaps ask: How comes it that the people with whom she passed this month do not make the discovery, when by letting it alone they sacrificed the life of an innocent person? But this is easily accounted for, by supposing them

involved



involved with *Canning* in some guilt, which makes their own preservation depend upon their secrecy, or that their friendship for her makes them prefer her safety and character to the life of an old gipsy. When we see hardly a Sessions pass at the Old-Bailey, without instances of wretches hazarding their salvation in the next world; and, what touches them much nearer, their ears in this, by perjuring themselves to bring off their companions: we ought not to wonder if the same motives should incline them to stay at home, when for so doing the law has ordain'd no punishment.

Nothing of all this is pretended to be true, but it is, what the common story is not, extremely credible in itself; being no wise contradictory to our experience of the actions, passions and interests of mankind; no wise contradictory to the moral phænomena related of *E. Canning's* character by Mr. *Fielding* and her friends; and no wise contradictory to certain

physical phaenomena \* of her health, related by Mr. *Dodd*; who, tho' but an indifferent logician, seems to be a very careful enquirer into things that relate more particularly to his own profession.

*A month of weeks*, as she calls it, being spent in some such manner, *she makes a shift*, with her first recovery of strength, *to crawl home to her mother's house; ill-colour'd, lean, weak, and in an old gown and cap (or handkerchief) that did not belong to her.* The first questions were, no doubt, Where have you been? How came you into this frightful condition? What is become of your cloaths? These are all queries that she knew would be put to her at her return, and it was necessary to have some sort of an answer to them; else she must, by her silence, have pass'd for a whore, and have been excluded from every honest family. What could she answer? She could not tell them what we suppose to be the truth; and any excuse,

\* Mr. *Dodd's* physical account, page 14.

altho'

altho' it should not be believed, was better than none.

She therefore behaved with as much conduct and discretion as her unhappy situation would allow, and told them a lie, so general and void of circumstances, that she had reason to imagine it could not be farther traced, and so her character would remain at least in a state of doubt; which was gaining a great point as things stood with her at the time. Her lie required no sort of invention, and only consisted of dry answers to the necessary questions that were asked her, viz. *That she had been robb'd of her cloaths and money, carried some miles out of town, and confined with hardly any victuals or drink, in a dark empty room.* This was the most particular description she could give of her place of captivity, and was a very blind direction for those who might go in search of it. She probably thought herself no less safe in saying, *that it was situated near the Hartford road, as she knew by seeing the Hartford coach go by.* And, indeed, how

could she imagine, that there was any person in the world so sagacious as to be able to tell from the above description, in which of all the houses upon the *Hartford* road she had been a prisoner? But here she was mistaken, and may perhaps some day repent her having been so descriptive. For *either the first night, or early Tuesday morning, one of her friends mentioned the house of mother Wells, she being a most notorious woman* \*.

The

\* The reverend author of the letter is supposed here to allude to a case publish'd by *Canning's* friends ten days after her return; which, for the satisfaction of the public, we shall subjoin entire. As likewise a paragraph from the *London Daily Advertiser*, of *Wednesday* the 31<sup>st</sup> of *Jan.* which must have been sent to the printer the very day after she came home; and by which it appears, that her friends had fixed upon *Wells*, and her house, before any of them had been down at *Enfield* to see either, or even before they had been with the sitting alderman.

### The CASE of *Elizabeth Canning*.

**E**LIZABETH CANNING, servant to Mr. *Lyon* in *Aldermanbury*, had leave given her to go and see her uncle and aunt on the first day of *January* last. As she was returning home in the evening of the same day, she was seized by two lusty fellows in *Moorfields*, directly at  
the



The innocent countenance and distressed appearance of the girl, joined with her good

the gates of *Bethlehem* hospital : After they had rifled her pockets, they took her into the middle walk of the said fields, where they stripped her of her gown, apron, hat, &c. She crying out, murder ! one of the fellows struck her on the right temple, which immediately deprived her of her senses. When she recovered, she found herself in an open road between the two robbers, who soon convey'd her to a house, in which she saw an old woman and two young ones. The old woman told her if she would do as they did, (which was whoring and thieving) she should want for *nothing* : But upon her refusal, the old woman cut off her stays, and then forced her up a pair of stairs, with horrid imprecations, and threatening to cut her throat if she made the least noise. She was then confined in a *dark room*, and had only about a quartern loaf in stale and mouldy crusts, and a gallon of water to support her, during the whole time of her confinement, and a *little hay to lie on*. On the 29th of *January* she escaped, by making a *hole in the boards of the window*, about four o'clock in the afternoon, and came to her mother's house, about ten at night, in a most miserable condition.

When this unhappy young woman was asked where she had been, she could give *no other account* than that she had been confined in a house on the *Hertfordshire* road, which she knew, by seeing the coachman who drove her mistress into that country pass by, through a hole of the window.

The house of that notorious woman, well known by the name of mother *Wells*, between *Enfield Wash* and *Walsham Cross*, was immediately suspected ; and from many circumstances, appears to be the dismal prison of this unhappy sufferer, whose melancholy situation since

good character, had from the very first, such an effect upon the good people of the neighbourhood, as to deprive them of all power of examination; so that they never doubted the truth of her ridiculous tale, and were only solicitous to know who

her miraculous escape, is worthy the compassion and charitable contributions of all public-spirited people, and every one who has any regard for the safety of their own children and relations, who are equally liable to the same inhuman and cruel usage, as the beforementioned young person; who since her escape from the house of that monster of a woman, has been in a most deplorable condition; the whole course of nature, having as it were been put out of its usual action; she has, through her uncommon and cruel usage, been deprived of the natural effects of food, nothing having passed through her, since being first hurried away in the manner before mentioned, but by the art and indefatigable pains of the physician and apothecary who attended her, till the 7th of *February*, when she had *an urinary evacuation*. All these circumstances being duly considered, it is not doubted but a subscription, or contribution will soon be raised, to enable the persons who have undertaken to detect this notorious gang, to prosecute their good intention with the utmost vigour, as such a nest of villains is of the greatest danger to the safety of all his majesty's good subjects.

The truth of the above mentioned facts, we whose names are under written, (inhabitants in and about *Aldermanbury Posern*, who have known the above *Elizabeth Canning*

who were the wretches who had thus abused her; and no sooner was the name of Wells

*Canning* from her birth, to have always been a very sober, honest and industrious girl) are ready to attest.

*Francis Roberts.*

*Thomas Miles.*

*John Marshall.*

*Robert Gerrard.*

*Jasper Brydon.*

*Thomas King.*

Cases may be had gratis, and donations are taken in at the *Royal-Exchange Coffee-House* in *Threadneedle-Street*; at *Lloyd's Coffee-House* in *Lombard-Street*; at *St. Dunstan's Coffee-house* in *Fleet-Street*; at *Mr. Say's*, Printer in *Newgate-Street*; and at *Mr. Francis Roberts's* in *Aldermanbury Postern*, who is appointed Treasurer for carrying on the prosecutions.

Feb. 8th. 1753. *Virtus Hall*, one of the women sworn to by *Elizabeth Canning*, made a confession before the worshipful Justice *Fielding*.

Paragraph from the *London Daily Advertiser* of Wednesday Jan. 31.

On Monday night the young woman, who was advertised as left in *Houndsditch* on New Year's day last, about nine in the evening, came home to her mother, who lives in *Aldermanbury Postern*, and gave the following extraordinary account of her being forced away and detained.

She had been at *Saltpetre Bank*, near *Rosemary-lane*, to see

*Wells suggested, though only from their own brains, but they were sure that her house was the scene of all this villany. Here all doubt and reason took their flight, and left nothing to direct the conduct of those well-meaning substantial tradesmen, but passion and enthusiasm.*

To confirm their belief of what they no longer doubted, those who knew any thing of *Wells's* house or its situation, asked her questions concerning it; to which, as she might plainly perceive they were

see her uncle and aunt, who came with her as far as *Hound-ditch* in her way home, where she desired them to return. She went from thence into *Moorfields* by *Bethlehem-wall*, as the nighest way home; there she was met and attacked by two fellows, who pulled off her hat and gown, cut off her apron, then gagged her, and threatened her with bitter imprecations if she cried out to cut her throat. They then forcibly carried her to *Enfield*, to a house kept by one mother *Wells*, near the *Wash* by the ten mile stone, which place they reached about four o'clock in the morning. The fellows left her in that house, and she has not seen them since. *The woman of the house* immediately cut off her stays with her own hands, and with the horrid-est execrations forced her into a room, where she was kept upon bread and water. She broke her way through a window almost naked, and in that wretched condition came home. She left several unhappy young women in the house, whose misfortune she has providentially escaped.

asked



asked with a friendly intention, and not with any design to entrap her, she always answered, Yes. By which means she might possibly have been furnished with some little knowledge of what she was before totally ignorant; and her neighbours, like the boobies who go to astrologers, were amazed to hear her relate in the afternoon, what their questions had taught her in the morning. This method of proceeding is not only natural and probable, which is all I require of it, but it likewise appears, by several passages in their accounts, to have been actually their method. *I asked her, says Mr. Scarrat his deposition at the Old Bailey, if she perceived a tanner's house near, she said she believed there was.* I only mention this to shew how easy it would be to account for her giving some particulars relating to a place which she never was near, even before she was carried down to it, in case she had given any such particulars; which it however does not appear she did, by any thing that her friends have yet

yet published, or that they lay'd before the jury.

However, her compassionate neighbours thus heated and persuaded upon their own evidence of the guilt of *Wells*, and the truth of *Canning's* story, upon the *Wednesday* morning, hurried away the poor creature to repeat it all, before *Mr. Chitty* the sitting alderman, in order to the prosecution of *Wells* and her gang; for the defraying of which a subscription was set on foot.

On *Thursday* morning they set out, *Canning*, her mother and other two women, in a coach; and several of their neighbours on horseback, to examine into the affair, and to apprehend the criminals. And now it will appear how little *Canning* was acquainted with her month's abode. For although *Mr. Adamson* was so good natured as to be there an hour or an hour and a half before the coach arrived; and having seen the room rode back to ask *Canning* several questions concerning it—— which were no doubt asked and answered in the manner

manner I have already mentioned. Yet, notwithstanding all his questions she was so ignorant, that after being seated some time on the dresser of the kitchen into which the room opened, which she has since sworn to be the place of her confinement, yet she never said, That is the room. But, as Mr. Adamson goes on to depose, after having been carried up (through a passage) to examine the house, she said none of the rooms she had seen was the room in which she was confined. Then I asked if there were any other rooms; they said, yes; out of the kitchen (I had before been in it, but did not say so then, because I had a mind to see if she knew it) We had her up into it. She said, This is the same room in which I was, but here is more hay, &c. \*

In all the depositions of the neighbours, besides an extreme eagerness and impatience to communicate their own persuasion, there appears great credulity and simplicity, particularly in this of Adamson, who certainly did not mean to instruct

\* See the Sessions Paper, p. 114.

*Canning* by his returning back to meet her; for if he had meant that, he would not only have asked her *if the room had any bay in it, or a chimney in the corner*, but he would have asked her if it did not go out of the kitchen; by which he would have saved her the fatigue of searching through all the rooms on the other side of the passage, and of letting herself be stupidly dragg'd up to the garrets to find the window through which she made her escape, in hopes all the while of seeing *a room with bay in it*, of which she had received the hint upon the road; and by that single question, concerning the door, would have enabled her to point to it as soon as ever she entered the kitchen.

In short, my Lord, it does not appear distinctly from any of the evidence produced at the *Old Bailey*, that *Canning* knew any thing at all of this room till she was led into it by Mr. *Adamson*; but that it was then, for the first time, she was furnished with the knowledge of  
those



those particulars, which she afterwards put into her deposition, before the justices, and the jury, at the trial. Such as *the bay, the chimney in the corner, the door out of the kitchen, the saddle, the basin, and the tobacco mould*; and of every thing but *the jagg*, which, I suppose, is to be found in every house upon the road, and seems to be the only mark, besides *some plaister being broken off from the outside of the window*, by which Mr. Adamson was directed to chuse this room in preference to the rest.

There has hitherto appeared no contrivance or romantic genius in *Canning*; nor has there appeared any occasion for genius, in order to deceive men who had such an appetite for being deceived.

*The people of the house being brought before her, she pitched upon Mary Squires, on account of her superior age and ugliness, for the mistress of the bawdy-house, who had in the mistress-like manner she related cut off her stays* \*. Hereupon she and the rest of

\* See the paragraph from the London Daily Advertiser before inserted.

*Wells's family were put into a cart and carried in triumph before Justice Tythmaker, who, upon the oath of Canning, and the concurring testimony of her friends, committed Squires and Wells to prison.*

And here, seeing nothing worse than human weakness and folly in the whole proceeding, I cannot forbear extending my tenderness to the poor creature whose falshood I am endeavouring to detect; and do not see, when thus detected, that she has been guilty of *the blackest, most premeditated, and audacious perjury, levelled against the lives of several innocent persons*, as Mr. *Fielding* would represent it. There does not appear any thing *premeditated* or even voluntary in any of the proceedings of *Canning* against *Squires* and her companions. We see only a lie calculated without the least view beyond that of excusing herself at a time when her conduct stood greatly in need of an excuse. All that followed was entirely owing to the inconsiderate zeal of her friends, which must at first have given her infinite comfort, by  
relieving

relieving her out of a desperate plunge; and which she durst not afterwards check, by not concurring with them in all their inventions, for fear of throwing her affairs back into that suspicious state out of which their warmth had drawn them. So that, by an unavoidable train, she was, in a manner, forced to confirm by perjury that lie which she had been forced to make. I say *forced*; for in cases where an affirmation or oath is offered, manifestly to acquit the person who makes it of some supposed guilt, it can never be reckoned voluntary; and is far from being so in the eye of the law, which has ever that tender regard to the souls of men, as not to allow an oath to be administered to those, who are suspected, from a regard to their own lives or characters, to be under any such temptation of perjuring themselves.

*Upon the 6th of February Mr. Fielding, at the earnest desire of Mr. Salt the attorney, undertook to examine into the affair. And next day Canning was brought before him, with her information ready drawn up by*

*Mr. Salt, to which she swore and put her mark in his presence\*.*

But Mr. Salt, being a lawyer, knew that the law required two witnesses in order to condemn any person of a capital offence†. So a warrant was issued to apprehend Virtue Hall, who, upon the 13th, after some hours of proper management, was brought into

\* See Mr. Fielding's pamphlet, page 32, &c.

† Previous to this examination of the 13th, which is all transcribed out of Mr. Fielding's Pamphlet, there appears to have been one on the 8th, which has not fallen under the notice of the Author of this letter, nor mentioned by Mr. Fielding, tho' we learn it from the postscript to the case of *Elizabeth Canning* already inserted, and from the following paragraph in the Public Advertiser of Friday the 9th of February.

On Wednesday last, at the earnest desire of the Prosecutor, Mr. Justice Fielding undertook to examine into the robbery of the girl, who, in the beginning of January last, after having been robbed in *Moor-fields*, was carried by two men to a house in *Enfield-Marsh*, where she was stript of her stays, and then confined in a miserable room near a month, with no other sustenance than a quartern loaf and a pitcher of water. On Thursday evening a girl who lived in the house, and who was apprehended by a warrant from the Justice, was brought before him, and was under examination from six till twelve at Night; when, after many hard struggles and stout denials of the truth, she at length confessed the whole; by which means it is not doubted, but that all the actors of that cruel scene will be brought to the fate they deserve.

*Justice*



Justice Fielding's presence, in tears and in a trembling condition. Upon this he endeavoured to comfort her, saying; Child, you need not be under any fear or apprehension, for if you will tell us the whole truth of the affair, I will give you my word and honour, as far as it is in my power, to protect you. She answered, she would tell the whole truth. But, altho' the Justice continued to examine her in the kindest manner, she was guilty of so many prevarications and contradictions, that he told her he would examine her no longer, and would leave her to stand or fall by the evidence against her; and, at the same time advised Mr. Salt to prosecute her as a felon, together with the gypsy woman. Upon hearing that she was to be prosecuted as a felon, and that her life was to be left to the evidence of persons, who she must think actuated either by the highest degree of madness or wickedness; she thought it was better to trust to Justice Fielding's word of honour than their evidence; and said she would tell the whole truth. So after asking her a few questions, which he says she answered with more appearance of

*truth than she had done before, he sent her out with Mr. Salt the attorney, who in two hours returned with an information in writing, to which she swore and set her mark before Justice Fielding.*

That I may not trouble your Lordship with any repetitions, I shall refer my remarks upon the evidence of *Virtue Hall*, till things come before the *Old Bailey* : and shall only say here, that it was no other than what, bating the stile, she might have made, without the help of Mr *Salt* ; being only a repetition of the few circumstances, before related by *Canning* ; and which had been, for a fortnight preceding, the conversation of every alehouse within the bills of mortality.

That Justice *Tysbmaker* and Justice *Fielding* might be misled by the simple manner of *Canning* is very possible. It is likewise possible, that those who censure them for it at this time, censure them improperly, by being acquainted with circumstances, relating to the affair, unknown to those magistrates.

The

The Event has abundantly justified their conduct; since, whether the story turns out to be true or false, the appearances which are thought sufficient, in a court of justice so fair and so merciful as the *Old Bailey*, to condemn the accused, must be more than sufficient to take off any censure from a Justice of peace for the commitment.

Let us therefore proceed to the trial, where your Lordship will see a degree of carelessness, which cannot be accounted for upon any other principle but the force of prepossession; which served those concerned as an INWARD EVIDENCE of the gypsy's guilt, and made them think any enquiry needless, farther than the meer forms of law required.

And yet, perhaps the *Old Bailey* never saw a trial where there were, *prima facie*, more circumstances to render the accusation suspicious. For besides the numberless improbabilities that appear to the dull-est and most ignorant in the relation of the accuser; there appear, at the first hearing of the two evidences, *Canning* and

*Hall*, who join in a pretended proof of the principal facts, circumstances that ought to bring their testimony into suspicion, and which it required some pains and questioning to remove.

There is, in the first place, an agreement and a disagreement in their relations, which are of a quite contrary nature to the agreement and disagreement, which are ever known to exist in relations honestly given by different persons concerning the same transaction. For in accounts that are delivered with truth by two different persons concerning the same affair, there will be different circumstances constantly told by the different persons, according as their different memories and apprehensions suggest them to the relators; but when the same facts occur to the relators, there never is, or can be, any thing material in the different manner of relating them.

In the Depositions of *Canning* and *Hall* the direct contrary appears. For *Hall* has not added one original circumstance from her own knowledge,  
to



to what had been before related by *Canning*, by which agreement she throws a glaring suspicion of her evidence being a bare repetition of what she had heard from *Canning*: while, on the other hand, she gives positive proofs of her ignorance, by blundering and disagreement, in the manner of relating those circumstances of which *Canning* had given her the hint. Particularly as to the time of bringing in the water-jugg.

The doubts arising from these agreements and disagreements were very natural and obvious, and certainly required much scrutiny. There were accordingly some questions asked, which received answers more tending to increase those doubts than to remove them. Such as, *Did you hear any talk between them (Wells and Squires) after she (Canning) was in the room?* Hall. *They took care I should know but little. In two other answers, she says, she knew nothing of the man who came along with Squires's son, and never saw him before or after that night. It is somewhat*

what uncommon for people to be partners of so much deliberate wickedness with so little knowledge of one another. *Being asked whether she had ever seen the cap and ragged bed gown which Canning brought home with her, and said she found in the grate, she answered, No, she never did.* Were not these all proofs that her knowledge went no farther than what Canning had taught her?

Hall had moreover mentioned a very curious circumstance in her information written by Mr. Salt; *that she was the first that missed Canning, which was on the Wednesday, two nights and a complete day, after she had escaped; and this she repeated at the Old Bailey in these words. I was the first that missed her, I asked the gipsy woman once whether the girl was gone, she answered, what is that to you, you have no business with it? but durst not go to see if she was gone. If I had, very like they would have served me so.* Yet this heap of absurdities passed without one question to make her explain what she meant by saying, *she durst not*

go to see if she was gone, when she knew she was gone; or what else it was she meant by *missing her*, and in what manner she did *miss her*.

It is impossible, my Lord, for two false witnesses to stand a separate examination of ten minutes, if it is done with the least attention; without manifesting, by their disagreement, their ignorance of what they pretend to know. Never was separate examination more necessary than in this case, and yet, so far from employing it, those questions were not asked which their actual disagreement seemed to call aloud for. As for instance, *It was sworn, with great prolixity, by Virtue Hall, that Fortune Natus and his wife had lain constantly in the kitchen for eleven weeks before Canning's escape. In another place she swears that on the 2d of January, at 4 in the morning, when Canning was brought into the kitchen, where she had her stays cut off, there were only herself, and the other three women, Squires, Wells, and Wells's daughter. Was it not a most natural*  
question

question to have asked, where *Fortune Natus* and his wife lay that night, since it is plain they were neither in the kitchen nor the hay loft?

One would imagine it was owing to extreme hurry and scarcity of time that those queries were neglected. But that does not appear to have been entirely the case; for I have counted in the *Sessions* paper at least six questions put to *Canning* and *Hall* that tend absolutely to nothing. Such as, asking at each of them, *How they called the place they put Canning into, &c.*

Another great inaccuracy to be observ'd in this examination, is; when proper and conducive questions were put, suffering the witness to return answers not at all relative to them. As, for instance, when the court asked Mr. *Adamson*, *Did any of the people seem unwilling to be inspected?* He answered, *Yes, they were unwilling to be stop'd.* And then went on with his former narration. But their being unwilling to be *stop'd*, was no more an answer

fwer



swer to the question that was ask'd, than if he had said, they were unwilling to be hang'd. And yet there the question dropt.

But the most inaccurate part of all the examination, and what tended chiefly to mislead the court, was when the examiners were contented with general and ambiguous answers, by which they were made to understand much more than the witnesses meant; who, it is believed, did not mean to deceive them. This is plainly the case in the deposition of *John Wintlebury*, who being ask'd, *Have you heard the evidence she (Canning) has given in court?*

*John Wintlebury. I have: She gave the same account, but not so fully that night as she did before the sitting Alderman, on the Wednesday after; but all agrees with what she said here.*

*R. Scarrat* likewise answers to the same question. *I also heard E. Canning examined before the sitting Alderman. She gave the same account she has done here.*

These two witnesses seemed to say something very satisfactory to the court; but,  
if

if they had been made to explain themselves, it would have all vanished away. For they, by this general answer, meant no more than that what she said before Mr. *Chitty*, the sitting Alderman, did not contradict her evidence before the jury; but the court certainly understood by it, that she had given as full an evidence then, with regard to particulars, as she did at the *Old-Bailey*. This ambiguity, which I dare say helped very much to forward the belief of *Canning's* story, and the Gipsy's condemnation, would have been easily removed, by asking the following questions.

Did *Canning*, when before the sitting Alderman, give any particular description of the room in which she had been confined?

Did she mention any hay being in it?

Did she describe a chimney in the corner?

Did she mention any other furniture besides the jugg?

Did she mention the saddle and the bason?

Did

Did she mention the tobacco mould, which, being of so particular a nature, would have been sufficient in itself to have proved her having been in the room, where it was afterwards found?

Did she describe the stairs, as being on the inside of the door, and the door opening into the kitchen?

Did she say, the woman that cut her stays took the knife out of the drawer of the dresser?

If these questions had been asked, there is no reason to believe but that they would have been all answer'd in the negative, altho' the witnesses seem'd, in their general answer, to affirm them all, by mistaking the intention of the court. It would have then appear'd, that *Canning*, in swearing to all these particularities, in court, and before the justices, had sworn to what she did not know till the day after she was before the sitting Alderman; and that, consequently, her story, if it was not proved false, was, at least, proved to have no support from external circumstances;

stances; and that it rested barely upon her own oath and that of *Virtue Hall*, the nature of which has been already explained. But the questions, as above, not being asked, the fact was thought to be prov'd, and the poor gipsy condemn'd to death.

The *evidence of fact*, as Mr. *Fielding* very justly observes, *is alone safely to be depended on, as it is alone incapable of a lie.* And yet, it was so far from being regarded in this trial, that, tho' it never appear'd stronger upon any occasion than against *Canning*, the poor wretch *Squires* would have been long ago hang'd; if that sentence, which no *evidentia rei* were capable of respiting, had not been respited by the oath of an acknowledged perjurer: Of such weight is personal authority, in opposition to reason and experience. Such is the credit of oaths, in this land of perjury.

Thus, my Lord, I have run over, in as few words as I could, the principal circumstances that mark the incredibility of *Canning's* relation; the various steps  
by



by which it acquir'd credit; and some of the most obvious omissions, which prevented those falshoods and mistakes from being detected, at the trial. And, I must own, that, altho' I am not at all fond of writing, I was glad that your curiosity furnished me with an opportunity of writing upon this subject to your Lordship, to whom I am bound by many ties of duty and affection. For this is not barely an enquiry concerning a pair of old stays, or the bad diet of a servant wench; nor about the life of an old gipsy (tho' no man ought to think himself too great to interest himself in the distresses of the meanest) but it is an enquiry of a much more interesting kind: no less than *an enquiry into the nature of moral evidence*, the axis upon which all human affairs turn, and of which the true knowledge is of the greatest use to persons of all ranks; and is doubly necessary to one of your Lordship's high station; as you not only require it for the conduct of your own peculiar concerns, but must make use of it likewise in

disposing of the property, and sometimes of the lives of your fellow subjects, as a member of that high court of judicature, in which your noble birth will soon entitle you to a seat. It is for this reason, I have been glad of an opening to communicate to you what my years and experience have furnished me with upon this subject; and wish, that some more able pen would undertake the same task for the publick; which, if I may guess by the foregoing transaction, stands greatly in need of some instruction.

And indeed, by the free and happy constitution of our country, it so happens, that the lowest man in it may be call'd upon, as a jury-man, to decide in matters that immediately concern the lives and goods of his fellow subjects; where an ignorance in examining and weighing the evidence brought before him, may be attended with very fatal consequences to others, and of future uneasiness of mind to himself; as might have happen'd to the twelve well meaning men who condemn'd

*Squires;*

*Squires*; had it not pleased God, by unexpected means, to prevent the execution of the sentence.

In short, my Lord, the *jurymen*, except in those cases, which come before the court of Chancery, and the house of Peers, are the sole JUDGES of the lives and properties of Englishmen. That I may shew you this in the strongest light, it will not be improper to give you a detail of those personages that compose an English court of justice; such as they are in FACT, and stripp'd of the common *words* in which they are disguised.

There is first the PROSECUTOR and CRIMINAL, or, as they are called in cases of *meum & tuum*, the PLAINTIFF and DEFENDANT. Next there are the sworn JUDGES of the trial or cause, who are called the *jury*, composed of disinterested men of unblemished characters. All the rest of the personages, though called by various names, are only, *in fact*, different kinds of EVIDENCES.

First there are those who are called in common language the EVIDENCES or WITNESSES; who are supposed to be disinterested, and relate, upon oath, what they know, concerning the relation which the criminal, or defendandy, bears to the fact of which he is accused.

The second sort of EVIDENCE go by the name of *council*, who are to inform the aforesaid JUDGES or *jury-men*, what they know, concerning the relation in which the fact stands to the laws of the land. But this sort of EVIDENCE differs extremely from the first, inasmuch as they do not deliver their evidence upon oath, and so far from being disinterested, are professedly SUBORNED, or as they term it *fee'd*. Their veracity has therefore no sort of stress laid upon it, which gives rise to

A third sort of EVIDENCE, commonly called *the judge*, not from any power of deciding, which is lodged solely in those twelve JUDGES, whose verdict is definitive and uncontroulable; but from his sitting in the same high place where *actual judges*



*judges* fit in other countries. And is perhaps for this reason sometimes called *the bench*. This sort of EVIDENCE is like the second, well learned in the law, but differs from them, in having taken an oath to be honest, and is, by his situation in life, out of suspicion of being suborned. His office is, to give true evidence concerning the relation which the laws of the land bear to the crime of which the party is accused; and to prevent the FEE'D EVIDENCES from deceiving the twelve JUDGES, by laying falshoods concerning those laws before them. An English *judge* may be justly considered as a living *Corpus juris*, published by authority, for the use of the unlearned; which needs no index, but opens of itself, wherever it is necessary, and is, upon every occasion, its own commentary.

I have indeed heard from some of the gentlemen of *Westminster-hall*, that jury-men are judges of *fact*, but not of *law*. A distinction, such as one often meets

with amongst the learned, without a difference; since there is no question can arise concerning law, or concerning any thing else that has a real existence, which is not a question concerning matter of fact: so that, if it is the office of jurymen to be judges of fact, their office is to judge of every thing which is the proper object of the human understanding. This is not only plain to abstract reasoners, but is obvious to the common sense of mankind; and is, notwithstanding the learning of the learned, the actual practice of our courts of justice, where jurymen every day give a peremptory decision concerning the causes that come before them; and acquit or condemn, without thinking themselves obliged to account for the grounds of their determination.

This being fairly the case, it extremely behoveth every man who may be called upon to sit in judgment, that is every Englishman, to make himself well acquainted with the nature of evidence; how

to weigh one thing against another, and to distinguish the true from the counterfeit. For my own part, altho' I shall always look upon a trial by juries as the great bulwark of our political liberty; yet, in the present state of ignorance, credulity, and irregular method of enquiry, I should be extremely fearful of my life and character, if I were accused of a capital offence; and should, by no means, think my innocence a sufficient protection.

It was formerly ordained, for the security of the accused person, that there should be the oaths of two credible witnesses against him, before he could be legally condemned. From hence, by a most absurd conclusion, it is presumed that the oaths of two persons are a sufficient proof of the truth of any fact, be it ever so unaccountable; so that if a man is accused of murdering another upon a certain day, and then by way of concealment, eating him up, at a meal, (a fact incapable of proof from any human testimony,

ny, because it will always be more likely that any number of men should be deceived, or have an intention of deceiving, than that such a thing should have really happened) yet if this is sworn to, by two persons of unimpeached characters, the jury is bound in conscience to bring him in guilty; and nothing can save him, unless, by fair or foul means, he can bring two other persons from *Plymouth* or *Coventry*, to swear an *alibi*, and that they smoaked a pipe, or played at whist with him upon the Day mentioned.

To prevent this absurd method of proceeding, and the cruel consequences attending it, it is incumbent on the learned, who know the rules of probability, to divulge all those rules to the public, and especially to explain more fully, and enforce the principle with which I set out in the beginning of this letter, *that no evidence is to be received in proof of any fact, unless its weight is strictly conformable to the improbability of the fact it means to prove.*

But



But no person who is in the least acquainted with the present or past times, or has made any observations on men and manners, will urge: That it is a very unusual thing to find human testimony false, or that it is very improbable it should turn out to be so; therefore human testimony is never to be urged in support of any fact that is, beyond a certain degree, improbable.

It is the want of having been acquainted with this, which has occasion'd those, who have reason'd in favour of *Canning*, to fall into an error. They have thought it sufficient, if they could find possible means of accounting for some one, out of the great number of improbabilities related by her; or of finding evidence, of weight sufficient to over-balance it. But they have never consider'd, that when the number of those improbabilities is very great, their accumulation amounts to something so near to an impossibility, that it may justly, in common language, be so called.

A man

A man who tells us, that he saw twenty aces thrown at one throw, by twenty fair dice, may perhaps, if his character is good, gain credit; but if he tells us, that he saw the same throw repeated twenty times running, there is no man of sense, who will scruple to pronounce, that there was falshood, either in the dice, or the story teller.

Thus, my Lord, I have run through all, that at present occurs to me worth mentioning on this affair; and I dare say, have intruded much longer on your patience, than you expected. I can make no other apology for it, but reminding you, that it is always dangerous to set an old man a tattling: and, as *George Dandin* says, *vous l'avez voulu*; so you must take the consequence.

Every thing is now settled with regard to my nephew's commission, in which I have received great assistance from Lord ———, I intend, on *Wednesday*, to accompany him as far as *St. Albans*, on his

his way to *Holy-Head*, and shall next day set out for your Lordship and my charge, from which I have been too long absent, and am, with the greatest respect and affection,

*My LORD,*

*Your Lordship's, &c.*

LONDON, *May* 15,  
1753.



[ 22 ]

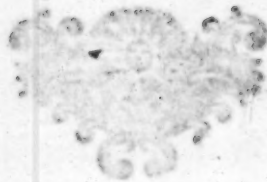
his way to Hob-Hob, and shall next  
day set out for your Lordship and my  
charge, from which I have been too long  
absent, and am, with the greatest respect  
and affection,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's Sec.



London, May 17,  
1722.





A N  
E S S A Y  
O N T H E  
N A T U R A L I Z A T I O N  
O F  
F O R E I G N E R S.

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THE SECOND EDITION.

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*Visam Britannos hospitibus feros.* HOR.  
Νηπιοι εδ' ισασιν ὅσω πλεον ἡμισυ παντος. HESIOD.

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## ESSAYS

## ON THE

## Naturalization of Foreigners.

**A**MONGST the various productions with which the past time has enlightened the present, there are none which may be more safely relied on than those anonymous pieces which go by the name of Proverbs. We find that nonsense of every kind is received with applause, when it happens to drop from what is called a *great Name*; and that it is sometimes, on the same account, transmitted from age to age, like the toe-nail-parings of St. NICOLAS, with religious veneration and astonishment. But those proverbial maxims, not being able to tell who was their fire, and pretending to no rank, but what their own merit procures them, could not possibly have supported their credit so long in the world, if experience, from which they originally sprung, had not been constantly ready to attest their veracity. They are the true philosophy of the vulgar; and are extremely useful

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in the conduct of private life. In this respect, THE VOICE OF THE PEOPLE may be said to be THE VOICE OF GOD; but in no other: for, if ever that saying is meant to recommend the opinions of the vulgar in matters of more general consequence, there are few common sayings so untrue. The business of the bulk of mankind is not to think, but to act, each in his own little sphere, and for his own little purposes; and this he may do, very completely, without much reflection, by the force of habit alone: leaving the conduct of the whole to the few of a more extended way of thinking; or to the great Conductor of the universe, according to that more than vulgar proverb, EVERY MAN FOR HIMSELF, AND GOD FOR US ALL.

A HABERDASHER of small ware, for instance, if he happens to be but one degree above an idiot, knows, by the help of those maxims, how to manage his own peculiar business to the encrease of his stock, and the security of his family, better than if he were directed by the best philosopher of them all. He knows that he is to buy cheap and to sell dear, and, for that purpose, to keep the trade in as few hands as possible, and to burn, sink, and destroy all those who take upon them to haberdash, without being *free of the company*; knowing, that though THE MORE THE MERRIER, yet, THE FEWER THE BETTER CHEAR. He likewise knows, that A PENNY SAV'D IS A PENNY GOT,



GOT, and consequently, that in his family, there is need of certain *sumptuary laws*, to prevent himself from going too often to the Punch-house, or Sadler's-Wells; and his wife from wearing more silk gowns than the nature of gossiping absolutely requires. To preserve the grandeur and dignity of his family he says, BETTER AN EMPTY HOUSE THAN A BAD TENANT; and from thence concludes, that it is better his daughters should go virgins into the other world,

*With all their imperfections on their heads,*  
than that they should slip away to May-fair-Chapel with foot soldiers, or hackney-coachmen, and bring forth a numerous progeny to light lamps, or cry mackarel about the streets.

Certainly nothing can be more just than these maxims; and a steady adherence to them must, in time, procure him his desired ten thousand; make him a very respectable man in his ward, perhaps an alderman; and Miss BIDDY and Miss SUKEY, besides living in ease and affluence, may come, at the age of fifty, to be look'd upon as *very genteel sort of girls*, and to be visited by Sir HUMPHREY GUTTLE's lady, and the best ladies in the lane.

But when my haberdashing friend has brought his wisdom so far, there let him stop. Let him not, in the pride of his success, fancy he has *a head*, and that he could make the state richer, happier, and more respectable, by the same

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means which he has employed to raise his own family: for the moment he applies his maxims to any thing out of the walls of his own house and shop, that moment he launches out into the boundless ocean of absurdity. A state, and a single family in that state, do not differ in magnitude only, as is generally imagined, but are very different in their nature, and must be sometimes conducted and improved by means (in all appearance, at least) directly opposite. This general proposition, and the bad consequences which have resulted to the public for want of a due attention to it, may, perhaps, be the subject of our future enquiry. At present I shall only take notice of one particular vulgarity, a consequence of one of the foregoing maxims, which has always prevailed, more or less, in this Island; tho', I think, of late, with more than ordinary noise: and that is, the complaint that foreigners are employed in England, in great numbers, to the prejudice of the natives. This complaint is not entirely confined to the waistcoated populace, tho' it, no doubt, began there; but has ascended from them to others who wear coats, nay, laced waistcoats; from these to hackney writers, whose sentiments have been sometimes drivell'd out in senatorial speeches.

An attempt, indeed, has been made to discountenance this narrow and injudiciously selfish spirit, by bringing in a bill, giving the rights of British subjects to all those, wherever they may  
hap-

happen to be born, who are willing to make a part of our happy constitution in church and state. *But it pleased not the million*, and was thrown out, for reasons which would be very entertaining, if they could be all collected and compared together. "What," says a fox-hunting 'squire, "would you let in an inundation of beggars upon us, without art or industry, to become an additional burden to the poor's-rate, already too heavy for our shoulders?" "There spoke the tongue of an angel," says his taylor: "Good, your honour, stand by Old England, and don't encourage any more of those vagabonds to come over; for we have but too many of them already to take the bread out of our mouths." How is it possible to reconcile these two opinions concerning foreigners, so opposite, and yet so common in the mouths of those who are willing to exclude them? One represents them as so many idle drones, that fatten upon the labours of the rest: the other, as so intolerably busy as not to suffer any body to be employed but themselves.

If experience may be allowed to decide in this matter, the taylor's reason will alone be found to have even the appearance of foundation; and hence arise most of the complaints of the vulgar. It is certainly true that foreigners are apt to take the bread out of some mouths. But out of whose mouths? The mouths of the proud, the idle, the ignorant, and the debauched. And are



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we, for the clamours of such, to deprive the nation of the great advantage which must accrue to it, from the accession of so many skilful and industrious hands, which the hopes of living better than in their own countries, daily brings over to us? Neither are those complaints, mean as they are, in general, well founded. For those very grumblers owe part of the little bread they enjoy, to the general wealth, which the industry of foreigners has brought into their country. I should be glad to know what sort of a figure this island would make, if it were to refund to the continent all those whose names shew them to be of foreign extraction. Let it refund their own to the Saxons, Danes, Normans, French and Germans, and, I believe, there are few of the rest who would choose to remain in it. They all, however, join in the common cry against new comers; and yet, it is certain, that the ancestors of one half of them were once strangers; and there is as little doubt that the posterity of those, who are now strangers, will, in a very short time, call themselves Englishmen; and may perhaps, like the rest, fling dirt at their forefathers, by shutting the door, in an opprobrious manner, upon others who have an equal title to be admitted. He is an Englishman, and he alone, who contributes to enrich and defend England; and he who does  
not,



not, is an Alien, if he merit not a worse appellation. The time may come,

Εσσεῖται ἡμαρ ὅτ' ἀν ποτ' ὀλωλῇ Ἰλίου ἱρῆ,  
Καὶ Πριάμος, καὶ λαὸς εὐμμελίῳ Πριάμοιο,

the time may come, when the tide of prosperity may ebb, which still flows into this happy island, and may not only carry back many of the foreigners it now brings, but many of the natives along with them. Would they who grumble at the encouragement now given to foreigners in England, be glad to hear that Englishmen are better fed abroad than at home, and that half the shops in Paris were occupied by them? They would, undoubtedly, grieve at the news instead of rejoicing, which they ought naturally to do if their present complaints had any thing rational in their foundation.

In the year 1744, this exclusive, this persecuting, this corporation spirit seized with great violence upon the English footmen, and gave a beginning to a sort of *bellum servile*, in the very heart of this great metropolis. A select committee of those gentlemen advertised a rendezvous in the news papers, to be held at *Hickford's* great room, *in order to concert ways and means to oblige their masters to turn away all their foreign servants*. But this combination, so abominable, if it could have been at all supported, became next day extremely ridiculous, by the vigilance and courage of Justice DE VEIL; who,

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for the virtues, civil and military, which he exerted upon this occasion, received, from his majesty's hand, the honour of knighthood.

But, altho' this gallant and useful service was *pleasing to the superior powers, the cause of the vanquished did not cease to be dear to many* Cato's, male and female, who thought that no demand could be more reasonable than for British-born subjects to enjoy a monopoly of vails and laziness, by which their vails and laziness would come to be greatly encreased; and thereby that proper equality be preserved betwixt master and servant, so essential to the freedom and independency of the British constitution.

To shew how ill these good people reason in what relates to the general interest of their country, let us suppose a practice established the very reverse of what they approve, and, that the fashion of keeping foreign servants were carried so high as totally to exclude the natives from wearing liveries. It is demonstrable that such a fashion, however foolish in its motives, would be attended with the greatest advantages to Britain. For, first, we should have much less chance of cabals and combinations from men, who, being brought from all corners of Europe, and incapable of combining under any title but the most odious and unpopular, could have no prospect of relief from a corporation-fund, after a forfeiture of their services and characters. Secondly, we should be much better served by those

those who had received the early habits of submission, in countries where subordination is better established, than by those who think they *degrade and debase the Briton*, if they condescend to do above one third of the work for which they are paid.

These, indeed, are only private considerations, whose truth cannot be absolutely ascertained without a greater number of experiments than any body will ever take the pains of collecting. But tho' the advantage or disadvantage to private families, arising from such a fashion, should be still a subject of dispute, the advantage, with regard to the public, will bear no controversy.

For the high wages and vails would draw young men enough from all quarters of the world, to fill ever so many liveries; and, when one race of those men extinguished, the laws, which fashion and conveniency have established, requiring celibacy from footmen almost as much as from dominicans, they would be recruited fresh and fresh every day by new comers from abroad. Let those who *talk* of their country, for once *think* what benefits would arise to it from such an extraneous aid. Let them think how many thousands of able-bodied young men would be preserved to the farms and manufacturing towns, who now come in shoals to London, upon the prospect of living there in a luxurious and lazy manner. Let them think how  
many



many would be spared to encrease the national riches by commerce, and the national glory by arms, who now, for want of worse hands, loiter away their youth in the halls and kitchens of the rich. These patriots surely are not afraid that the price of labour will become so low to the farmer, that he will be enabled to pay too much rent, and export too much corn to foreign markets. They cannot be afraid that the price of labour will become so low to the manufacturer, that he will be enabled to export his broad cloth too cheap to Turkey, and by that means supplant the French, who have almost entirely deprived us of that branch of commerce. But if these are not their fears, it is hard to say what they are afraid of, since these are two of the most obvious consequences attending the reception of foreign servants. I know there are some who pretend that there is danger of the foreigners, settled amongst us, joining in any hostile Invasion to conquer or distress this island. But this fear, real or pretended, is ill supported by any kind of reasoning, and least of all by experience; which, in all our intestine commotions, kept these foreigners ever free from any suspicion of treason; and has discovered an uncommon zeal for the defence of the government in such of them as are protestants, for whom alone any public encouragement was intended.

And what, after all, is this *public encouragement*, which was proposed by a general bill of



naturalization? Nothing but the removal of the *public discouragements*, which the ignorance of former times had, by express laws, laid upon foreigners, to this nation's detriment as well as theirs. It was only meant to permit them to come over, ready trained, to do our work, to man our fleets, to pay our taxes, and to maintain our poor. "No," says a leading man in the vestry, "that is not all; they will expect likewise to be maintained in their turn, whenever any of them happens to be unfitted for labour, by sickness or old age." This is a very common objection, and, perhaps, we may find it full of sense and equity; especially, when we consider that the parish could not be supposed to have the pleasure of feeding, cloathing, and teaching them in their infancy.

To be serious, there is no danger of any infirm people leaving their native countries, upon the hopes of getting a share of the pitiful pittance, which is left by the parish officers, for the maintenance of the public poor. Those who are found to leave their native countries, in order to seek their fortunes in distant climates, are not the old, the maimed, the sick, and the distressed; but the young, the healthy, the vigorous and the vain; those who have, or fancy they have, talents, which will give them a superiority over the inhabitants of those countries to which they chuse to migrate. The natives of every country have great advantages in  
business.

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business over strangers, arising from that circumstance alone of their nativity. It is a great point in business to set out with the knowledge of the language and customs of the country, to enjoy the assistance of relations and school-fellows; and to have customers transmitted by habit from master to apprentice; in all which respects the disadvantages of foreigners can only be compensated by superior skill and industry.

But, say their opposers, were the foreigners to recommend themselves only by their superior skill and industry, we should not dare to complain; but they make themselves acceptable to the rich and the giddy, by oddities and artifices, altogether unconnected with their callings. For instance, say they, we shall have an artist, who, though inferior in talents to several of our own countrymen, shall carry away the vogue from them all, by wearing a long beard, and looking like a Turk, when there are twenty persons ready to make oath, that he is neither better nor worse than a christian. And is this a cause of complaint? One would think that Englishmen had no beards, or that there was a law here, as in Russia, to prohibit the growth of them. The gentleman does not, as I have been informed, pretend to any exclusive patent for these his accoutrements; and if he has discovered, that by submitting to eat his bread with the sweat of his mustachio's, he shall earn better bread than would otherwise come to his share, it would be foolishly

foolishly disputing *Tastes*, to find fault with the proceeding.

In short, be that as it will, it ought to have no place in a question betwixt English and Foreigners. Quackery and affectation are the growth of every climate; and of our own dear country as much, at least, as of any other under the sun. Long before this hairy phænomenon landed at Dover, that force of English genius, which laid open to Sir ISAAC NEWTON the laws of attraction, had discovered to the famous TIDDIDOL that there was a virtue in particles of silver-lace, artfully disposed upon an old hat and coat, that would greatly accelerate the circulation of gingerbread. The effects of this talismanic contrivance are well known; the cause and manner of its operation are not so obvious. All we know is, that it acts upon those who come within its vortex; but in what ratio, whether according to the cube, or the square of the distance, is yet undetermined by philosophers. For my own part, being totally ignorant of geometry, and at the same time not superstitious enough to believe, that there is any sympathy subsisting betwixt the silver upon TIDDIDOL's hat, and the copper in the pockets of his customers; I am inclined to think, that it affects their understandings only, and that the process is entirely of a logical nature. The astonished people see, that those bits of silver-lace, make TIDDIDOL an extraordinary fine gingerbread baker;



baker; and then conclude that an extraordinary fine gingerbread baker must bake extraordinary fine gingerbread. I am not sure, that this is extraordinary sound reasoning, but I am sure, from many years observation, that it is as conclusive in favour of artists, born upon the banks of the Thames, as of those who come from the Rhone or the Tiber.

Before I take leave of this subject, it may not be amiss to make a remark or two upon the word *Alien*, when applied to persons resident in England. He is, it seems, an alien, and by law subject to various discouragements, *who is born of foreign parents, in a foreign country*. A law-description altogether arbitrary, and no better grounded on the real nature of citizenship, than if it declared those to be aliens, who were born with such coloured eyes, or in such a season. One way to be sensible of this, is to examine the two disqualifications separately, and to ask: Is it being born in a distant country which unfits a man from being a freeman of England? No; for the sons of Englishmen born abroad are all English. Is it then being born of foreign parents? No; for the sons of foreigners, if born in England, are acknowledged to be English. It is inconceivable, why neither of those circumstances of birth, taken singly, should tend to disqualify the person so born, and yet, that by a strange sort of arithmetic,

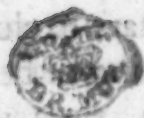


metic, the addition of those two nothings, should produce a something so disadvantageous.

In whatever light we view this distinction, I am confident it will be found to owe its derivation entirely to the municipal laws of this island; and, consequently, a repeal of those laws, by a general act of Naturalization, would entirely remove it; and then every man, residing in England, would be an Englishman to all intents and purposes. So that to oppose such an act, is, in other words, to assent to laws, by which many thousands of Englishmen are excluded from this country, and from partaking of benefits, which, by the bare participation, they would proportionably encrease, and be equally entitled to with the rest. To talk of a foreigner, naturalized by residence, as a foreigner, is as great an abuse of language, as to talk of melted ice, as ice. For as the latter becomes water by melting, losing all the properties of ice; so the other becomes an Englishman, ipso facto, by the incorporation: and any reasonings, drawn from his former state, can only serve to mislead the shallow and unthinking.

Let us therefore lay aside all such unnatural distinctions, that divert our attention from those, which it is ever destructive to overlook. Let us be careful to distinguish honest men from knaves, labourers from drones, and ingenious men from coxcombs: Let us punish crimes, starve laziness, and ridicule false pretence, whether the culprit be Trojan or Tyrian: But let

us not sacrifice useful realities to unmeaning words; nor submit the learning and experience of the present age, to the narrow-hearted whims of our ignorant and savage progenitors.



A  
D I A L O G U E  
O N  
T A S T E.

---

Οὐδεν ἐν ἀνθρώποισι διακρίδον ἐστὶ νοῆμα,  
Ἀλλ' ὃ σὺ θαυμάζεις τοῦθ' ἑτέροις γέλως.      LUCIAN.

*Mille hominum species, et rerum discolor usus:*  
*Velle suum cuique est, nec voto vivitur uno.*      PERSIUS.

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A  
D I A L O G U E  
O N  
T A S T E.

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LORD MODISH's Country-Seat.

LORD and LADY MODISH, LADY HARRIOT,  
and COLONEL FREEMAN.

LORD MODISH.

AND so you prefer HUDIBRAS to  
VIRGIL?

COL. FREEMAN.

I do indeed, my Lord.

LORD MODISH.

But why, my noble Colonel?

COL. FREEMAN.

Because he gives me most pleasure.

4 A D I A L O G U E

LORD MODISH.

Then allow me to tell you, George, you are with all your reading an absolute Goth, and have no manner of taste.

COL. FREEMAN.

So you told me last night, my Lord, when I preferred Canary to Champaign.

LORD MODISH.

No doubt; for that was just such another instance of your Gothicness.

COL. FREEMAN.

I agree with your Lordship that the cases are very parallel, and for that reason I mention your last night's observation. The word *taste* originally belongs to the palate, and it is not amiss to have that always in view, when we suspect a misapplication of it in the way of metaphor. It is by taste, no doubt, that we are able to distinguish salt from sugar, and mustard from apple-pie; its proper office being upon all such occasions to inform us what is what. But allow me to ask your Lordship, why you said I had no taste in wine, when it was plain, by my preference of one of the bottles, that I could very well distinguish it from the rest.

LORD

## LORD MODISH.

You certainly now affect to misunderstand me. By saying you had no taste, I did not mean that you was not capable of distinguishing; but, according to the usual application of the phrase, that you had a bad taste, and preferred the worst.

## COL. FREEMAN.

This is, my Lord, an application of the word *taste*, that, however usual, somewhat deviates from its original and proper sense. For, according to that, good taste can signify no more than a greater than ordinary accuracy in determining, in certain cases, that two distinct things are of the same or of different kinds, and when of different kinds in assigning the proper name to each. Take a man so endowed into your cellar, and without seeing the labels, he will tell you not only that this hogthead is Port and that Claret, but amongst the Clarets that this is of such a growth and such a year, that of such another. I am very sensible that your Lordship's application of the phrase is nevertheless usual: but if all the phrases that convey no distinct and invariable meaning were banished out of the world, we should be deprived, among the rest, of a great many that are very usual and fashionable. But, *a propos* of our last night's liquor, did you mean by the worst the least

6 A D I A L O G U E

wholesome? If so, I am afraid my taste can hardly be defended.

LORD MODISH.

No, faith; I believe the Champaign is the worst of the two in that respect. No; I meant that which had the worst flavour.

COL. FREEMAN.

Then I suppose you think me insincere in my declaration of liking Canary.

LORD MODISH.

I have known you too long, George, to lay insincerity to your charge. No; I make no doubt of your having really a very bad taste in your potations.

COL. FREEMAN.

You mean, then, I dare say, that it is not your taste.

LORD MODISH.

No; nor of any of your acquaintance, I'll be sworn.

COL. FREEMAN.

So then the goodness or badness of one's taste is to be determined by the taste of the majority.

LORD MODISH.

Certainly; and were it otherwise what confusion must ensue? for when men are to drink jovially together, it is highly reasonable that the  
few



few should yield in the choice of the liquor to the many.

COL. FREEMAN.

My Lord, I will allow your consequence: But what necessity is there for this society in drink, by which the conformity becomes necessary? When soldiers are to attack the enemy, such an union must be absolutely necessary; else one platoon might retire whilst another advanced. It is no less necessary where more pacific people are met to dance country-dances; else the man might be footing corners, whilst his partner was figuring in. Unless all fight and dance with one accord, the purposes of fighting and dancing would be entirely frustrated. But there is nothing in the nature of drinking, that hinders it from being performed as effectually, and to as good purpose, by a single person, as by one that has thirty legions at his back. When you can make it appear that a man ought to take physic because his friend is sick, or to drink because he is dry, it may then appear reasonable in him to drink of a particular kind of liquor because his companions happen to be pleased with the flavour of it: an extraordinary stretch of complaisance, from which no person seems to reap any advantage. For my own part, I profess myself an entire friend to toleration and liberty of conscience, and think it little better than popery and the inquisition to compel any man to swallow what

## 8 A D I A L O G U E

goes against his stomach, on pretence of preserving unity in public drinking.

LORD MODISH.

Thou art an odd fellow, George, that is certain.

COL. FREEMAN.

I am indeed, my Lord; for I always deliver my own sentiments, and in my own words.

LORD MODISH.

So then you reckon religion and drinking to be of the same nature. I think I have known you sometimes more lucky in your comparisons.

COL. FREEMAN.

I don't pretend, my Lord, that the parallel will hold in every respect; but with regard to the subject of our present conversation they are certainly very much akin: being both matters of private concern and advantage only; and, of course, the objects only of taste or private opinion. But when I speak of religion, I would be understood of what is speculative and ritual, and not at all of the moral duties: So when I speak of drinking, I mean drinking for pleasure, without taking any of its medicinal effects into consideration; for as by these society may be affected, they are very properly the objects of general concern and enquiry.

## LORD MODISH.

Then you don't allow the moral duties to be the objects of taste. My Lord Shaftesbury is of a very different opinion.

## COL. FREEMAN.

That may be ; but his Lordship stands not for divine authority with me. I know, my Lord, that there has been much unfortunate pains employed, by many authors from Plato down to Sir Harry Beaumont, in order to confound the objects of judgment with those of taste and feeling ; than which nothing can be more vulgar and unphilosophical.

## LORD MODISH.

I fancy it is not an easy matter to separate them ; and, as I know you have turned your mind pretty much to such enquiries, I should be glad to know what touchstone you recommend for that purpose.

## COL. FREEMAN.

It does not appear to me so difficult as it seems to those refined philosophers ; and thus I distinguish them. Whatever has a rule or standard to which it may be referred, and is capable of comparison, is not the object of taste, but of reason and judgment. On the other hand, the proper objects of taste, or feeling, are such as are relative to the person only who is actuated by them, who is the sole judge whether those feelings be agreeable, or otherwise ; and  
being



being informed of this simple fact from himself, no farther consequence can be drawn from it, neither does it admit of any dispute. Thus when a man tells me that venison eats better with currant than with gravy sauce, he only informs me of his private opinion concerning it. It admits of no reasoning, pro or con. There it must rest, and he must have the like patience to hear me, in my turn, declare that gravy sauce is far before currant; and this without making any reply, if he has a grain of sense. It is quite otherwise when either he or I assert that Westminster hall is longer than Westminster bridge, or that oak is specifically heavier than copper; for in each of those cases there is a standard to apply, to wit, a foot rule in one case, and a pair of scales in the other, which entirely exclude opinion from having any share in the debate. With regard to one thing's being comparatively better than another, there is likewise a standard of another kind, which leaves the preference to be decided by the judgment; and that is the relation which such things bear to the use for which they are both supposed to be intended. As for instance, if it should become the subject of enquiry which of two swords is the best, the intention of fighting being supposed, the preference will be reasonably given to that, which, by its superior strength, lightness, sharpness, and perhaps length, is the fittest for fight. If, for the same purpose, the comparison happens between a sword and a pair of scissars, the  
pre-



preference will, no doubt, fall to the sword for very obvious reasons. But vary the circumstances of the intended combat, and explain that it is not to be fought in a field, but in a post chaise or a centry box, and you will be obliged to rejudge the cause by a new standard, which will infallibly declare a pair of scissars to be a more fatal, and consequently a better, weapon than any Toledo in the world. It is possible, by thus supposing certain circumstances, to bring the most different and most remote objects in nature to be compared by a common standard; but where this is not provided, reason must be pleased to leave the bench, and refer the matter entirely to taste, or private inclination. It is that alone which can determine a young Lady in her choice between pink and blue, or perhaps between her Dancing-master, and the Sheriff of the County; and from such a sentence there lies no appeal. Having thus, as I think, fairly stated the different pretensions of judgment and taste, I will leave it to your Lordship to pronounce whether they are so like one another as to be easily mistaken.

LORD MODISH.

In the way you have stated the affair there can be no difficulty, and the maxim, that *there is no disputing of tastes*, is one of those that are the most universally received.

COL. FREEMAN.

The maxim is, as you say, my Lord, in every body's mouth, but there are very few whose under-

understandings are at all the better for it. I have, you know, in the course of my life, mixed in a great variety of scenes, civil and military, and have made one in all sorts of companies, from her Grace's drawing-room to a Gravesend tilt-boat, but have ever found, at least, three fourths of the conversations, high and low, to be employed in each person's declaring his own taste, and decrying that of his companions: a method of spending time which appeared to me so uninteresting, so unentertaining, and so unprofitable, that it has contributed more than any thing else to the solitary and bookish life that I have led for some years past. Not but that I find, every now and then, some of my calf-skin companions, who are guilty of the same egotisms, impertinently endeavouring to palm upon me their own opinions and those of their masters, instead of argument and matter of fact; but then I can more easily get rid of their company. I was last Sunday drinking tea at Lady Faddleton's, where unfortunately Miss Molly Bright happened to be mentioned as a beauty, and produced a dispute of an hour and a half, that made me sorry the holiness of the day did not suffer me to propose whist; for I think a total silence not so bad as so perverse an abuse of speech.

LADY HARRIOT.

And pray, Colonel, don't you think Miss Molly Bright handsome?

COL.

COL. FREEMAN.

Suppose, Madam, I should say yes ; what would your Ladyship infer from my answer ? Nothing more, I presume, than that she was handsome in my eyes. Were you desirous of knowing what she appeared in my Lord's, I fancy you would be under a necessity of putting the same question to him, just as if it had never been put to me.

LADY HARRIOT.

Then you think it is all fancy, and that there is nothing real in beauty.

COL. FREEMAN.

I have, Madam, too much reason to believe that there is something real in its effects, if you will accept of that as an answer.

LADY HARRIOT.

I am not philosopher enough to know whether it be an answer or not. But sure, Colonel, you must own there are some women whom all the world allows to be handsome.

COL. FREEMAN.

Your Ladyship seems to be more a philosopher than you are willing to acknowledge. You are endeavouring, I find, to withdraw female beauty from amongst the number of those things which are merely the objects of taste, by

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an appeal to a matter of fact, the general sentiments of mankind. But, supposing the fact to be conclusive, I do not understand how it can be so ascertained as to become a safe foundation for any superstructure of reasoning.

LADY MODISH.

Perhaps, Colonel, you do not allow there is such a thing neither as ugliness. Could you prove that point, there are some Ladies whom the whole town would think vastly beholden to you.

COL. FREEMAN.

The case of deformity is somewhat different, Madam, from that of beauty. Deformity may be subject to enquiry, and reducible to certain principles, altho' beauty should not. A face which has one eye larger than the other, which has the mouth awry, or one cheek fat and the other lean, is certainly deformed, and in this all men will agree. But it does not follow that the reverse of these will produce beauty. As to the agreement which Lady Harriot has observed with regard to the beauty of certain females, I believe it will not be difficult to account for it without allowing it to be real. As for instance, let us suppose that two or three of those worthies, who are by fate appointed to set fashions in our great city, should from amongst five thousand young women, equally free of deformity, pick out Miss Thingum, at random, and toast her upon all  
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occasions for a burning beauty. What will be the consequence? Those who are an inch below them in fashionability, if you will allow me the word, will catch the sound, and convey it like the watch-word of a camp from the Generalissimo to the sentinel. The machine being once set in motion, there is nothing to obstruct its progress. The men of sense never tire other people with declaring their own tastes, and are equally unwilling to lose their time in disputing the tastes of others. Amongst the fools there is here and there one to be found, who will engage in the wise controversy, and will say, *Indeed I don't see any thing so superlatively handsome in Miss Thingum, that there should be all this rout made about her*; but the greatest part of them are such poltroons as to be afraid of opposing the prevailing cry for fear of shewing their ignorance, always supposing beauty to be a science which it is incumbent upon every gentleman to understand. This I am sure of, that there is nothing more common, both for fools and men of sense, than when their toast is demanded, to give a fashionable beauty whom they never saw. As to the Ladies, tho' none of them can be supposed much smitten with Miss Thingum, yet they are all unanimous in allowing her to be handsome, and this from a very obvious motive. They all know that any hesitation from them would be ascribed to envy, which, as it would both lessen themselves,

selves, and add to the triumph of their rival, they are at a great deal of pains to hide; and all the while that they look upon her sway as usurpation, they, for their own sakes, assert her divine right. Mankind upon many such occasions become their own dupes, and fall prostrate before the idols which themselves have set up; but history, Lady Harriot, and the investigation of facts will always enable us to set the true stamp upon such sublime pretensions. Whatever is natural is of divine origin, and the first source of it will be for ever hid from our vain curiosity; but all sham claims to divinity are easily exposed, whenever the proper means are employed. Would you, for instance, be certified whether any particular race of Kings are by divine appointment, you need only trace their steps, and it is ten to one but you find the first of them at the head of a gang of rebels, murderers, and banditti. The same method of enquiry will set us right, as to the unbounded empire which town-toasts pretend to exercise over our hearts. A very little tracing will convince us, that altho' they are women by the eternal appointment of the Almighty, they owe their being, as universal beauties, to a very few men, and those perhaps neither the wisest nor the soberest of their species. At least we may in this manner account for the apparent universality of sentiment concerning them, to a degree that will render it

it too doubtful for any conclusion to be drawn from it.

LORD MODISH.

My dear Colonel, your history of Miss Thingum, as you call her, is very plausible; but you have not given us the proof of any of those facts by which you pretend to trace the progress of her glory. You seem here, I think, to give more indulgence to your own guesses than you are commonly willing to allow to those of other people.

COL. FREEMAN.

Your objection, my Lord, is very just; and as I knew not how to strip those general facts of the appearance of guesses, I was not very positive in my inferences from them. My notion, however, of that matter is formed from real observations, strong enough from their number to convince myself; tho' singly too inconsiderable, to be of weight in a question of so general a nature, or to be urged as proof to your Lordship: unless your experience happen to coincide with mine; which I am apt to believe is in some measure the case, by your allowing my account to be plausible. But I have an argument much more clearly founded against the agreement of mankind, with regard to the beauty of any particular female; which is, that such an universality of sentiments would stand in contradiction to all the  
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hitherto known principles of nature : for it would have been given in vain, if not for very destructive purposes. For what could be supposed more ridiculous, and even fatal, than for all the inhabitants of London and Westminster to be real, instead of pretended, admirers of one woman? Happily for the world, their practice, which is much more to be depended on than their words, shews us that this is far from being the case ; and that each of them has his fair, for whom he fights in private, and whose name he thinks too sacred to be mingled with the ribaldry and midnight debauch of a tavern.

LADY HARRIOT.

That may be very true, Colonel ; but may not a man think a woman beautiful without being in love with her ? and on the contrary, may he not be in love with one whom he does not think beautiful ? There is a thing they call the agreeable, which has often more powerful effects than mere beauty.

LORD MODISH.

Harriot is certainly in the right there, George ; I believe there is no body but has, some time or other, felt that distinction.

COL. FREEMAN.

My Lord, I have often heard the distinction ; but I am apt to suspect that it consists only



only in the opposition of real sentiment to mistaken knowledge; or rather, of a word with a meaning to one that has little or none.

LORD MODISH.

I should be glad to have that explained.

COL. FREEMAN.

Indeed, my Lord, the distinction betwixt beautiful and agreeable, when applied to faces, is barely verbal, and will vanish, together with all the difficulties attending this subject, immediately upon a precise definition of those words. We have only to ask ourselves, what *is beauty*? The philosophical answer, is, *That form which pleases*. Let us next ask, what is meant by an agreeable form; the answer is certainly, *That which pleases*. So that to determine which of the two, the beautiful or the agreeable woman, when put in opposition, is the genuine beauty, we need only examine the actual effects of both; and if it appears that love and desire are attendant upon agreeable women no less than upon beauties, as both your Lordship and Lady Harriot seem to allow, it will follow that the agreeable woman is really beautiful in the eyes of that man to whom she is agreeable, any reasoning or fashion to the contrary notwithstanding.

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LORD

## LORD MODISH.

Supposing your notion of the agreeable to be just, I should be glad to know what is then meant by beauty in opposition to what pleases only. You know it is a word in every body's mouth, and you cannot imagine they mean nothing at all by it. If I were inclined to doubt them, my own sentiments would convince me of their sincerity. Is there no such thing as regular features, which may satisfy the judgment, without touching the heart?

## COL. FREEMAN.

I have many reasons, my Lord, to believe there is not; but, without having recourse to any, the discourse of those who value themselves the most upon their connoisseurship in beauty, is sufficient to convince us that they talk with as little reflection as feeling upon the subject. Ask one of them what he means by *regular* features; he will first be surprised at your ignorance; and if you persist in your enquiry, will tell you, *features that are in due proportion*; ask what he means by due proportion, and he will perhaps tell you, after much stammering, *that Lady somebody's features are in due proportion*; ask why he thinks her features in due proportion, he will tell you, *because they are regular*; and if you carry on your questions to all eternity, the answers will still trot in the same

same circle they set out in ; and tho' very far from making us more knowing than we were, are perhaps the best answers that the subject affords. The folly lies in answering at all to such questions——You seem in deep contemplation, my Lord.

LORD MODISH.

Faith, George, I was first rummaging my brain to see whether I could not find there some rules by which features might be adjusted ; but to no purpose. From that I have gone upon a more humble search, to try if I could discover what it was that had all along induced me to speak of such things. For I assure you I meant something ; tho', to deal sincerely, I am not able, at this time, to tell what. Are you conjuror enough to guess what I meant ?

COL. FREEMAN.

If my knowledge and penetration were equal to your Lordship's candor I should not despair, however difficult the task, of giving you complete satisfaction. But as it is only a guess you demand, you shall have it, hit or miss ; and the more readily as this is not the first time I have endeavoured to account to myself, for so whimsical a phenomenon in human nature. A very little sedate reflection must convince a man of sense that there is no standard of female beauty, to which all the various degrees of it may be referred ; and yet it is no less plain that those



who every day so earnestly dispute about those various degrees, must have something which they persuade themselves is a standard. The question is only, how they came by such a persuasion? My conjecture is, that it is acquired by early education, and so early, that no man is able to remember its first establishment in his mind. I suppose a child of two years old is told that *Miss what do you call it*, whom he sees perhaps every day, is vastly handsome. This being the first time of his learning the word handsome or beautiful, and connecting an idea to it, he will never after be able to separate the word from its original impression; but will, from that accidental conjunction, form to himself a general system of beauty, and will keep it up, by a successive application of it to other women, many years after she who gave birth to his system is forgotten. And thus by a perverse adherence to theory, in a matter entirely practical, he will persist to his dying day in extolling a certain sort of faces for which he has not the least desire or affection. In this manner five hundred men may have five hundred standards of beauty; which, tho' all taken from women without any deformity or just exception, may be all exceedingly different from one another. What wonder is it then that one man's verdict upon a woman's beauty should be so little satisfactory to his companion, who measures her by another



other scale. This cannot be called *disputing tastes*; because taste or sentiment is here entirely excluded; but it is equally useless and irrational.

Such, however, seem to be the grounds upon which the common run of mankind venture to give their judgment in those matters. With regard to the more instructed and polite, there is another circumstance, which, having more the appearance of a common standard, has abundantly assisted in running them into disputes concerning beauty; and that is the agreement of painters and sculptors upon that head; which they suppose could not happen, if every artist was left to his own particular feeling of beauty, without any principles to guide him. But it is very easy to account for this agreement, without finding ourselves much nearer an universal standard than we were at first. No sooner were the arts of painting and sculpture brought to some degree of excellence, but the artists, in representing a Venus, an Helen, or any other personage, from whom beauty was expected, must have found all their endeavours to please rendered ineffectual by the variety of sentiments which different men, by the various structure of their nerves and organs, have of beauty: so that the painter's mistress, however beautiful she might appear to him, and however justly he might portray her, would have little chance of charming the spectators,

who would each think his own *Dulcinea* infinitely superior to the *Venus*. Neither would he mend the matter by substituting a beauty of his judgment, according to the method just described, whilst every man had a standard of his own, equally partial, by which he condemned it. Here necessity, the mother of invention, would come to his assistance, and set him upon a method that, although it might charm few, would disgust no body; that is, to form a face that should affect a medium in all its features and proportions, carefully avoiding every thing extraordinary, however himself might be struck with it. He must have found that tho' one man, either by a peculiarity of real taste, or of acquired prepossession, was fond of a high nose; another thought it detestable. That to one a fat cheek was charming, to another a lean one, and that each despised the other's choice as deformed and ridiculous. The painter's business was therefore to steer as clear as possible of these opposite rocks, and to give his goddess neither a high nor a low, but a straight nose, with cheeks that were neither fat nor lean, preserving the same mediocrity in all the proportions of her face. Upon such a principle as this we may suppose it was that *Polycletus* formed his *Venus*, which *Pliny* says was called the canon or standard; and that he actually did

did so, still farther appears by all the antique statues now remaining ; which, by their great similarity, plainly appear to be all copies, more or less exact, of one original, framed upon this cautious principle. But it is one thing not to be deformed, and another to be beautiful ; one thing to avoid censure, and another thing to please. Neither have I met with ought in the opinions of the eminent painters and sculptors, with whom I am used to converse, that any way inclines me to alter mine with regard to this matter. Those of them who have spent some of their best years in the study of the antique statues, and the modern imitations of them all over Italy, have told me that upon their first acquaintance they were not so much struck with the beauty of their faces ; but that the more they saw them, the more their admiration of them encreased. But this after-admiration is far from being a proof of their having any thing remarkably beautiful in themselves ; and is nothing more than the common effect of habit, which shews itself not only in things of an indifferent nature, such as cookery, dress, and furniture, but often also in things that are at first extremely nauseous and disagreeable, such as tobacco, coffee, and other drugs, which by use become so bewitching, that their votaries rather chuse to part with their health than resign them. Here then, in the antique, we find a sort of common measure,  
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but which falls mightily in its value when we consider that it is only of a negative kind, from which no excellence, no striking grace can be expected : and likewise that, imperfect as it is, it is known only to a few, perhaps not one in a hundred of those who talk about regular features ; and of those few there is still a much smaller number, chiefly painters and sculptors, on whom the habit of looking at those antiques has been so constant as to make any real impression. In such it may be called their taste ; but, as I hinted some time ago, we must be careful not to say that such people have a good or a bad taste ; since whatever is truly taste, whether it belonged originally to the nerves, or was produced in them by habit, admits of no comparison, in point of excellence. All we can say with propriety is, that such a man has the tobacco taste, or the sugar-candie taste, or the antique taste ; that is, he likes tobacco, sugar-candie, or the antique. This has in it nothing comparative, and is only an assertion concerning a matter of fact of the simplest kind.

But, my Lord, I find my eagerness in endeavouring to satisfy your Lordship's demand, has led me into a Professorial kind of discourse, that will be little agreeable, I am afraid, to the Ladies. It is the common effect of such subjects ; so let us call a new cause. Pray, Lady Modish, has your Ladyship seen the two new dancers that Rich has brought over ?

LADY



## LADY MODISH.

Whether I have, or have not, I sha'n't tell you. And truly, Colonel, you ought to make us some apology for breaking off a serious conversation upon our account; as if we were incapable of being entertained by any thing but trifles. It is true we are seldom tried with any thing else, but that is not so much our fault as that of you men; who think, no doubt, to preserve your authority the better by keeping us in ignorance.

## LADY HARRIOT.

Indeed, Colonel, the conclusion of your speech does not deserve, either from my sister or me, any acknowledgments that are favourable; and yet, such is my goodness, I cannot help owning that I have been much better entertained with your explanation of taste, than ever I was with any of those disputes which it daily occasions. Most men, indeed, who enter upon nice subjects before Ladies, seem rather, by their latin and cramp words, to aim at astonishing, than either entertaining or instructing us. But I must do you the justice to say that this is never your practice; for you always express yourself in so plain a way that I fancy I comprehend your whole meaning, tho' it is probable I am sometimes mistaken.

COL.

COL. FREEMAN.

I acknowledge, Ladies, both the justice and gentleness of your rebuke, and am perfectly sensible that, if I am not understood in a subject like this, which is not peculiar to any art or profession, the defect is in me, and not in either of your Ladyships. And as for the cramp words Lady Harriot mentions, they are seldom any thing but screens which vanity has hitherto employed in order to hide ignorance. Of late, philosophy has put on a more familiar air, and is not ashamed to have it known that she is nothing but common sense and experience methodised ; and it seems now agreed that the truly learned language is that which is best understood.

LORD MODISH.

I must own, Colonel, that the notion of an universal standard for the beauty of natural objects, would be very contradictory to that almost self-evident truth, that *whatever is is right*; since in the great variety of forms which God has contrived, the benign end of pleasing would have been frustrated, if he had not ordained a like variety to exist in the apprehensions and feelings of different men as well as of different animals concerning those things.

COL. FREEMAN.

It is most certainly so, my Lord ; and it is surprizing that so many ingenious men should  
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have lost their time in a search, the vanity of which is so obvious. Hogarth owns that his line of beauty and grace is not to be seen in a toad; which if true, ought to have convinced him, either that there was no such line, or universal receipt for beauty; or else that he had not yet hit upon it: since it hardly admits of a doubt, that a blooming she toad is the most beautiful sight in the creation, to all the crawling young gentlemen of her acquaintance; and that her crawl, or as they may possibly call it, her *pas grave*, is far before the minuet step, with all its wavings. An analysis or dissection can never be begun of any subject till the subject itself is ascertained, and consequently no analysis can be made of abstract beauty, nor of any abstraction whatsoever. Till a real something is discovered, which we are sure by experience is universally the source of pleasure, any attempt to discover the universal principle of pleasure by analysis must be fruitless; and the philosopher who engages in such a business, after finding that he has been gravely measuring a dream with a pair of compasses, will probably return at last to the *je ne scay quoy*, upon which he had at first disdainfully turned his back. Does your Lordship know Sir Roger North?

LORD MODISH.

Yes, a little; he seems to be a comical hearty old fellow.

COL.



COL. FREEMAN.

He is so, my Lord ; but he is something more ; for he is a man of a good deal of learning and reflection ; though, by a strange turn of temper, he seems to be at pains to conceal it, and when his good sense make its appearance, it is commonly under the disguise of waggery. I happened to be walking in the Mall with Sir Harry Beaumont, about a week after *Crito* was published, when Sir Roger came up to us, and, after congratulating his brother Baronet upon the success of his performance, and the figure it was like to give him in the eyes of the Misses, as an arbiter of beauty, Sir Harry, says he, I observe that in your distribution of grace you give twenty degrees to Mrs. A \* \* \*, and thirty to Mrs. B \* \* \*. Now I do not find fault with your tables, but I should be glad to know by what scale, weight, or measure you compute their several shares with so much precision. You certainly, answered Sir Harry, did not read my paper with much attention, or else you would have seen that *I did not pretend to have made my calculations exactly ; but rather to point out what might be done by more exact judges of beauty.* Ay, but, Sir Harry, says the old Knight, let who will calculate those tables of beauty, it will have but a very unscholarlike appearance, if, when the exactness of their calculations happens to be called in question, they  
should



should have nothing better to appeal to, than the infallibility of their own judgments. I am afraid that method would hardly pass muster at the Royal Society. Now, you must know, when I was a boy I was a great dab at figures, and though I seldom foul my fingers with pen and ink, I have not yet forgot the rules, and have been thinking that the rule of three or rule of proportion, might be applied so as to become a golden rule in comparing beauties as much as any thing else. It is performed, you know, by multiplying the first by the second, and dividing by the third; and being curious this morning to know with exactness how much Mrs. D\*\*\* excelled in beauty Mrs. C\*\*\*, I thus stated the question, *as a cat is to a wheelbarrow, so is Mrs. C\*\*\* to Mrs. D\*\*\**; but though I tried till my brain was ready to crack, I never could contrive how to multiply a cat by a wheelbarrow; so I could go no farther in my calculations. Now if you, or any other virtuoso, could fall upon the method of multiplying and dividing such matters; I am persuaded you would find out a certain method of gauging every woman's beauty, and *prevent it from being any longer left, as you justly complain, to the particular whim of ignorant people.* Sir Harry was a little stunn'd with this whimsical attack, but he did not lose his good humour, and only said, I see you are still the old man, Sir Roger; what should be grave you

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constantly turn to farce, and then left us to run after Miss Hoyden, who was crossing towards the palace. When he was gone, says Sir Roger to me, Our friend Sir Harry may despise the old proverb as much as he will, but such *comparisons* will always be *odious*, and it is no wonder, for they will always be absurd.

LORD MODISH.

I believe, indeed, we must leave the beauties of nature, where every thing is perfect in itself, to every one's particular taste, without attempting to dispute or compare them. But if I give you up that, I hope you will allow us that there may be a good or a bad taste where the contrivance of man has had a part. What say you, for instance, to a good taste in architecture?

COL. FREEMAN.

The same, my Lord, that I should say to a good taste in a dress or cookery, that, abstracted from health and conveniency, which are the objects of reason, it is one of those tastes which custom, a second nature, has bestowed upon us; and is so much mere taste that it can never, with any propriety, become a matter of dispute or comparison. To insist upon one form of dress, or one form of building, being in itself more beautiful than another, must appear to a philosopher entering upon as senseless a controversy, as the pretending that one dish was in it-

self more palatable than another, and that he who preferred the one had a better taste than he who preferred the other.

## LORD MODISH.

But sure, Colonel, there are rules for the beauties of architecture, and not the smallest ornament of a base or cornish without its settled proportion.

## COL. FREEMAN.

Were that strictly the case, my Lord, we should call it knowledge or judgment in architecture, not taste; for, as far as these rules go, no taste is required, either good or bad. An Artist may, by a Palladian receipt alone, without any taste, form a very elegant Corinthian pillar; as a cook, without any palate, and by the help of the *housewife's vade mecum* only, makes an unexceptionable dish of *beef a la daube*. These rules are plainly no more than the analysis of certain things which custom has rendered agreeable; but do not point out to us any natural standard of beauty or flavour, by which such things, whether pillars or dishes, could have been originally contrived to answer the purpose of pleasing. I should be exceedingly glad to hear a reason why a Corinthian capital clapt upon its shaft upside-down should not become, by custom, as pleasing a spectacle as in the manner it commonly stands. I know this would be look'd upon as a sort of blasphemy

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by some of our dilettanti; but so is every opinion, however reasonable, which opposes what is by custom established in any country. Perhaps there are countries in the world where my capital is so much in taste, that their virtuosi would be surprized to hear that there was any nation so absurd as to put the volutes uppermost. At least there is no imagination of that sort so odd that some similar experience is not sufficient to justify and render probable.

LORD MODISH.

How then came the present fashion (since you will have it to be no better) of architecture to be so universally embraced?

COL. FREEMAN.

It's universality, my Lord, does not extend beyond Christendom; and, if it should become the taste of the whole universe, the same means, which have procured it a reception among us, will account for its further progress, without our giving ourselves the trouble of searching for any standard in nature for its recommendation. It is the nature of all fashions ( I except only those of a religious kind) to take their rise from the sovereign will and pleasure of the rich and powerful. Men in such circumstances are known from thence to acquire a presumption, which naturally induces them to take the lead in every thing; while those very  
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circumstances which engage them to indulge their caprices, enable them at the same time to render those caprices respectable. As for instance, let a man of ordinary rank or figure appear in publick in a coat whose cuffs are triangular, when the mode is square; and there is no doubt he will meet with many to despise, but none to imitate him. Let the same be tried by a man blest with title, riches, youth, and all the trappings of prosperity; let the sleeve be of velvet, curiously embroidered, and part of a suit of cloaths in all other respects fashionable and rich, the triangle will then be found to meet with a quite different reception, and tho' feeble in itself, will be so powerfully seconded by, being incorporated with, the title, the embroidery, the coach, and the footman, as to become part of the august idea of his grace; and so far from being able to render him ridiculous, will receive a share of respect by being part of him; and from being tolerable, will soon become an object of imitation, especially to the persons who are the most intimate with him and his cloaths. The more those imitations encrease, the more the sensation of their beauty is confirmed; till, in a short time, all other cuffs but the triangular are detestable. City taylors bribe his Lordship's valet de chambre to let them take it's shape and proportions; and here is, at last, a precise rule established.

LORD MODISH.

My dear George, this is a lamentable sinking from architecture to cuffs.

COL. FREEMAN.

I do that, my Lord, in imitation of some great men of our acquaintance, who let themselves down very low in order to rise with the more security. The progress of fashion in dress, and the feelings which are the consequence of that progress, being the most familiar, and having at the same time the quickest revolutions, are of all others the fittest to explain the nature of fashion in general. The fashions in building, tho' more durable than those in dress, are not for that the less fashions, and are equally subject to change. But as stones and bricks are more lasting than silk and velvet, and as people do not make up churches and palaces so often as they do coats and capuchines, we must have recourse to history for the knowledge of those changes, which we can learn but very imperfectly from our own proper experience. In history we shall find that every nation received it's mode of architecture from that nation which, in all other respects, was the highest in credit, riches, and general estimation. The admiration that attends whatever is great in its dimensions, costly in its materials, and precise in its execution, is, as far as our experience goes, universal; and naturally inclines the mind in favour of any form which accident has combined

bined with those admirable qualities. The Egyptians were the first people we know of who were so rich, and at their ease, as to build with grandeur, cost, and neatness; and from thence inspired the Greeks with a love for those ornaments which their caprice had added to the useful part of architecture. The Greeks, in their turn, becoming for many ages a free, a rich, and a happy people, had an opportunity of practising those arts in many sumptuous buildings; where, beside the invention of arches, and other solid improvements in the art of building, they made many changes, as their fancy led them, upon the Egyptian ornaments. In this state was architecture when it was transplanted to Rome, by a people who, by perpetual wars, had in a short time attained from the meanest origin, to the greatest height of power. Destitute of money, and profoundly ignorant of all the arts of peace, they had never raised any buildings of which they could boast; and no sooner had they an opportunity of considering the Grecian temples and other public works, great in themselves, and set off with all that costly materials and the genius of their excellent painters and sculptors could add to the skill of the mason, but struck with the complex object, they decreed the Greeks to be the only architects in the world, and submitted willingly to receive laws in the arts from those whom their Arms had subdued. Perhaps the philosophy,



phy, poetry, and music of Greece, for which they began at the same time to take a relish, served not a little to raise the reputation of the Greeks, and might strengthen their authority in architecture; tho' not necessarily connected with them. An admiration, to a degree of bigotry seized the Roman artists and connoisseurs, and put an effectual stop to any farther change or improvement in architecture. Their sole study was to imitate the Grecian buildings, and the being like or unlike to them became soon the measure of right and wrong. Rules so compiled were committed to writing, and continue to this day, together with some of the antient buildings upon which they were formed, to be the standard of taste all over christendom. Time may possibly produce on it insensible changes, but there is almost nothing which can be imagined to give it a total overthrow, unless Europe should become a conquest of the Chinese.

#### LORD MODISH.

If the five orders of architecture with all their paraphernalia are to reign in splendor, till we are conquered by the Chinese, they need be under little apprehension. But, my dear Colonel, allowing this chimerical conquest of yours to take place, why must our architecture be destroyed along with our freedom? Why may we not as well suppose that our conquerors should receive the fashion in  
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those matters from us, as you say the conquering Romans did from the Greeks?

COL. FREEMAN.

Because, my Lord, the circumstances of the conquerors and the conquered would be very different. In China the arts of peace have been long cultivated, and they have been long charmed with buildings, which though of a taste very bad, according to our notions, are yet more extensive and more sumptuously adorned than ours. It would be no wonder, then, if they refused to change that form of building which long usage had rendered graceful, for one which had all the awkwardness of novelty, without any other advantage to dazzle and prepossess them in its favour. To them the simplicity of the antique would appear mean and rustic; and Covent-Garden church, the pride of English architecture, would be judged fitter for a barn than a temple. Neither do I mention this to your Lordship upon bare conjecture, but from the similar experience of what formerly happened in Europe when it was overrun by the Goths. I see you smile at the mention of my friends the Goths; but allow me to tell your Lordship the Goths were not so Gothic as they are generally imagined. The arts, indeed, of poetry and painting seem to have been unknown or neglected among them; but in that they could be little worse than the people

ple they overcame, and in some other respects they were much their superiors. Civil discord, and all the evils that attend anarchy when joined to a most contemptible superstition, had produced in the Roman empire a poverty of every kind, and an almost total obliteration of those arts and sciences for which the same nations had been, but a few centuries before, so justly celebrated. Among the Gothic nations the art of war was well understood, as appears by their constant superiority, whenever they appeared in the field; and all the states of Europe, who at this day enjoy any of the blessings of good government, are ready to own that from this Gothic source those blessings were derived. But they were not like the Romans, a gang of meer plunderers, sprung from those who had been, but a little while before their conquest of Greece, naked thieves and runaway slaves; but a colony from an empire, no less than that of the Parthians, which had long subsisted in splendor and magnificence; and which, in establishing itself upon the ruins of the empire of Persia, had succeeded to the greatest part of its riches, luxury, and elegance. It is in Parthia or Persia that we must look for the origin of those shoals of warlike men, and for the origin of that taste of architecture of which the stately examples still remain, like so many trophies to mark the progress of their victories. And if we turn our eyes to the seats of the present Sophi  
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of Persia, we shall there see the pointed arch, and all the other parts of what we call Gothic architecture, still in high fashion, and studded over, as Milton says, *with barbaric pearl and gold.*

LORD MODISH.

I do remember, now you put me in mind of it, to have seen at Sir John Locke's, a collection of drawings representing bridges, palaces, and mosques, done, as he told me, from the buildings themselves, while he was resident at Isphahan; and which very well correspond with what you say concerning the likeness between the Persian and Gothic taste of architecture. But I should not think that likeness, however strong, a sufficient proof, that those, who have been always called Northern nations, were really the sons of the East.

COL. FREEMAN.

There are, my Lord, a great many other proofs of the Parthic or Persian extraction of the Goths to be gathered from the similitude of language and manners, and even from the history of their migration. Some of these proofs, as they accidentally occurred to me in my reading, I have been at the pains to commit to paper, and shall communicate them to your Lordship upon your return to London, if your curiosity leads you to the enquiry. But whether they came from Persia or Peru, it is plain from the sight of the first public buildings  
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erected by them, upon their entrance into the Roman provinces, that they came from some great and established empire, where the art of building with grandeur and magnificence had been, by the practice of many ages, brought to an uncommon degree of perfection. Structures such as Westminster Abbey, with which Germany, France, and Spain abound, so extensive, yet so neat, so strong, and yet so richly, nay sometimes finically ornamented, can never be supposed the contrivance of hungry soldiers, during their march through the enemies country; nor of obscure savages, just escaped from under the snows of Sweden and Norway. Such arts are not so suddenly brought to perfection as to be the offspring of one man's brain; and if they were, yet the concurrence of all the different branches of those invaders, whether Vandals, Huns, Saxons, Normans, or Franks, in the same forms and decorations, plainly shew that there were certain antient and established rules for those things, which they all equally knew and respected. To men, thus prepossessed with ideas both grand and precise, the buildings they met with in the Roman provinces must have appeared mean and flat; and if they destroyed any of them without hesitation, whenever they stood in their way, it must not be attributed to their barbarous insensibility of what was elegant; but to their overweening fondness for their own taste, and unreasonable desire of imposing it upon



on others: a malady, which the most polished people when unrestrained by reasoning and reflection, are equally subject to, with the most savage.

LORD MODISH.

That the Goths did make their taste of architecture the reigning taste over Europe for several ages, I very well know. But, my dear George, your reason for its taking place of the Grecian, is not at all satisfactory; for if it bore it down at first by its loftiness and richness, it might, with much more ease, have maintained its superiority, after being familiarised by time to the conquered, as well as to their invaders. I should conclude, therefore, from the restoration of the Greek architecture, that it had something in its forms peculiarly adapted to please the sight, which made it at length surmount all the obstacles which force and custom had thrown in its way.

COL. FREEMAN.

Your doubts, my Lord, are exceedingly just, and I do not believe that any degree of knowledge in lines and numbers would ever be able to solve them. But there are many seeming mysteries, and which continue such against all the powers of abstract reasoning, which history, by leading us step by step, renders plain and simple. For many ages had bishops and barons, monks and knights errant, kept the people of Europe in slavery and dissention, sloth, ignorance

rance and misery. All the arts which tended to render life more humane and agreeable, were utterly discountenanced and forbid; and those alone kept up and practised, which were of use in supporting the pride and power of those tyrants. Canon law to defend the wordly pretensions of church-men, and metaphysics to promote and defend their spiritual absurdities, for the same gainful purpose, were what passed currently by the name of learning. When these failed, in determining the truth or falshood of a proposition, recourse was had, legally and coolly, to single combat; a kind of logic, absurd enough in all conscience, and yet perhaps not the most absurd kind then in use. Painting and sculpture were not yet found necessary to be called in aid of these holy cheats; so no man, as may well be supposed, presumed to carve or draw the resemblance of any thing upon earth. Military architecture shewed itself only in the castles of private gentlemen, with moats and draw-bridges; and the civil was only to be looked for in cathedrals and cloisters. The rest were all hovels and beggary. At last, about the fourteenth century, the cloud of ignorance began to disperse. The arrogance and avarice of the church of Rome had stretched the cord till it cracked, and brought on, in several parts of Europe, an enquiry into the spiritual rights of mankind, which that corporation had so grossly invaded; and these having been so interwoven  
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with their temporal rights, the enquiry always became the more extensive, the farther it proceeded; so that books, and all the other means of knowledge, became every day more and more in request. About this time the Greeks, flying from the Turks, after the taking of Constantinople, brought over their books and language into Italy: which, partly by the countenance and patronage of the family of Medicis, in a little time became a fashionable part of learning, till then utterly unknown in the West. A like unfortunate cause with that which brought over the learned Grecians, had before that time transported to Florence some Greek painters, had indeed, but sufficiently skilful to sow those seeds of the art, which, by proper encouragement, first at Florence, and afterwards at Rome, Venice, and Bologna, arrived at so admirable a degree of perfection. The polite arts, and all the several branches of true learning, have so immediate a connection that they always march together; and it is impossible to find any one of them in a tolerable degree, without finding along with it some portion of each of the rest. Thus, at the same time that the Greek and Roman classics were diligently sought after, amidst the dust and scholastic nonsense of the libraries and convents; the pick-ax was every where employed among the ruins, in search of statues and bas-reliefs, which the ignorance and misery of the times had suffered to lie for ages under ground. At the



the court of Rome, for the support of whose power some measure of true learning was at last become necessary, these enquiries after the learning and elegance of their heathen ancestors, were carried on with the greatest eagerness; and the rising love of painting, sculpture, and music, was not a little promoted by the use they perceived those arts might be of, in supporting a gainful superstition just ready to fall into contempt. Then it was that the Romans began to cast an eye of admiration upon the noble remains of heathen architecture, with which their city is, to this day, so richly stored. In that imperial city, the Gothic people, tho' they had, oftener than once, committed horrible devastations, had never made any settlement, nor ever raised any fabric. The buildings there had ever been according to the Grecian taste; but that being kept up only by tradition, without any precise rules, it had changed extremely from its original. To effect a total alteration in the fashions of any country, is an exceeding difficult undertaking; but here was only required a reformation, and a reformation that had antiquity and primitive purity for its principles. No sooner, then, was the love of heathen antiquity afloat, but the Bramantes and Michelangelos set themselves with great diligence to measure all the parts of all the antient buildings of Rome, and soon, by the help of Vitruvius, composed a system of architecture, which, as far as it  
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pretended to go, brought back the Augustan age to the masons and carpenters. Florence, and the rest of the cities of Italy, that were, with respect to architecture, in almost the same state with Rome, entered readily into this scheme of reformation, which, crossing the Alps, with the joint cry of all Italy, at that time the school of learning and politeness, carried every thing before it. And those Gothic structures, which had so long lorded it over all other works of stone and mortar, were now decry'd as gigantic and barbarous. Increase of trade and riches, all over Europe, particularly from the new-discovered Indies, produced a great number of sumptuous buildings in the new fashion; so that the fondness for it, which was probably, at first, no more than an affectation of Italian elegance, grew, in a little time, to be a real taste or sentiment.

#### LORD MODISH.

Of buildings did he speak, like Solomon, from the Pyramids of Egypt, even to the Banqueting house at Whitehall. As I hope to be saved, George, you would make an excellent grand master of the free and accepted Masons, and would prelect upon the wonders of the Letter G, to the astonishment of the whole lodge. But, seriously, we are all vastly obliged to you for this short history of a long transaction, many particulars of which I knew before, but never before heard them connected in so regular a chain.

chain. What you have said to prove that the beauties of architecture have no deeper foundation than fashion, that is habit formed upon caprice, carries with it great appearance of truth. But you philosophy men, when you take up any principle, are very apt to carry it farther than it will go, and to a single cause often ascribe an effect which perhaps proceeds from half a dozen. In many cases I will allow you that habit has a share in forming our sentiments; but is there not likewise an inseparable connection between beauty and propriety? And will not that which is fit and suitable in itself, be always more or less pleasing to the beholder?—I am afraid I don't express my meaning in the proper terms.

COL. FREEMAN.

Exactly, my Lord, like one of the trade. Such are the very expressions used by the followers of Hutchison, Shaftsbury, and Plato; who drew, moreover, this very obvious conclusion from them, that, by our different feelings or sensations of pleasure and dislike, we may safely pronounce the objects, from whence those sensations arise, to be right or wrong in themselves, without any farther examination or reflection. Happy sense for those who are endowed with it, and for which one would willingly renounce all human understanding, which is liable to many errors. What pity is it that so pleasing an opinion, so elegant a system

a system should have no foundation in fact! Hold up, for a moment, the mirror of experience to this metaphysical phantom, and it shrinks into the nothing from whence it sprung. The approbation of reason, and the approbation of taste, which those gentlemen have been at so much pains to unite and confound, will be found in their nature distinct and separate, and to be allotted for visibly different purposes by the author of our nature. That they often coincide is likewise true; but it is owing to other causes than their natural and inseparable connection, as will be perceived in examining the cases where this coincidence does, and where it does not appear. To begin with the most simple: The apothecary's prentice brings a dose of the bark to a man sick of the ague: The reason and experience of the physician, perhaps the patient's own experience, assure him, that swallowing this drug will restore him to his health. What says taste? That it is the devil of a dose; that it ought to be put off till to-morrow, and in the mean time calls for t'other bottle of Champagne. Taste then has no skill in physick. Let us see next whether taste, in its more remote and figurative applications, is more closely allied to fitness and utility. Amongst the objects of sight, there are none with which we are so familiar as those which dress exhibits, nor, as I before observed to your Lordship, so proper to produce examples for this subject. And

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there it will be ever found that our feelings of pleasure and dislike are conducted entirely by custom, not only in matters indifferent, but often in opposition to what is useful and proper. Pray, Lady Modish, what would your Ladyship think of our fine gentlemen, if they were to dress with their arms naked to the elbows?

LADY MODISH.

I should certainly think them very shocking creatures; at least if I may guess by the disgusting appearance which butchers and hat-  
ters make in the like equipage.

COL. FREEMAN.

Your Ladyship, I am persuaded, speaks not only your own sentiments, but likewise the sentiments of all the ladies in England, upon the occasion. All would agree unanimously, at first, in its being an ugly sight; and yet it is impossible to find out, in the naked arm of a well-proportioned man, any natural impropriety whence this sentiment of deformity arises; nor any that is not equally, at least, attached to the naked arm of a well-proportioned woman, an object which is allowed to raise in every one a sentiment very opposite. Custom alone can account for this whimsical taste, which breaks thro' all rules of reason and propriety; for a disengagement from sleeves is without doubt  
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most befitting the sex which is the most active, and destined for robust exercise and labour; and a close covering, especially in a cold climate, the most proper for that sex which suffers most from its inclemency. I have lived long enough in the world, Ladies, to see a great many changes in it, particularly with regard to shoe-buckles, which have been now large, now small, now round, now square, and all, in their turns, fraught with beauty and deformity. These changes are productive of much good to many industrious tradesmen and their families, and, generally speaking, very indifferent to the wearers. But I remember, about seven or eight years ago, the buckles, from the toes, where they had reigned in splendor some years before, had insensibly crept up to the leg; and so great was the desire, in our smarts, of creating pleasing feelings in the beholders by an amazing length of foot, that I have seen many of them limping about Ranelagh with their buckles above the joint, and suffering no small torture rather than they should appear with turpitude in a more convenient place. Instances of this kind in architecture are not so easily found. Building is, by its nature, a more serious and more deliberate affair than dress, and less subject, one would think, to the influence of whim; yet it is not altogether destitute of

examples, where the eye is pleased with what is the reverse of conveniency. For some of these a general cause, or rather origin, may be assigned. The present taste of architecture was formed, not upon the palaces and dwelling-houses of the antient Greeks and Romans, of which there were no vestiges at the revival of the arts, but upon their temples and other public buildings, from which the ornamental part has been borrowed and applied to domestic use, in a manner abundantly absurd, for the most part; and which, nevertheless, custom has rendered agreeable to the sight. I could name to your Lordship several houses, besides my Lord Mayor's, where the desire of charming the passengers, has induced the architect to darken the principal apartments, by clapping before the windows stately pillars which support nothing, or, which is much the same, nothing of any use. Whatever pains those gentlemen may take to dignify the ornamental part of their art by scientific reasonings about propriety and fitness, it will be found at last to owe all its power of pleasing to custom only. Ask one of them by what means it is, that a window pleases by being longer than it is broad, and a chimney by being broader than it is long; he will tell you, that it is from their natural fitness for their several purposes, such and such being the nature

nature of light, and such and such being the nature of smock. But let him be ever so learned in light and smock, this is but a shallow solution of the difficulty. The plain truth is, that on account of their fitness for their several purposes, they have been from time immemorial so formed; but it is the habit of seeing them constantly so formed, and not their fitness, which produces in us that sense of their beauty. This process will account for all the conjunctions of beauty and propriety, which to most people pass for necessary connections. What is the reason that any heavy body, supported by few and weak pillars, gives us an unpleasing feeling? Because the danger and inconveniency of such a disposition has been long known, and with care avoided; so that the least infringement of the established practice will shock us immediately by its unusualness, without allowing our reason to interfere by a slow discussion of its impropriety. In like manner may we account for all that concerns moral taste and sentiment; which will appear, upon the slightest comparison of the feelings of different nations with regard to behaviour, to be immediately and necessarily dependant upon custom, and but remotely and accidentally connected with right and wrong, or the invariable fitness of things.



LORD MODISH.

I begin to be afraid that taste, at last, must content himself with ruling over the finer arts. There I think you will hardly try to pull him from his throne.

COL. FREEMAN.

What arts does your Lordship comprehend under that title?

LORD MODISH.

Musick, poetry, and painting; or, as they call them, the sister arts.

COL. FREEMAN.

I know they are often so called; and indeed there is so great a likeness betwixt two of them, poetry and painting, that their sisterhood will be readily allowed; but betwixt musick and painting there is no likeness at all; and I am apt to suspect that musick passes for the sister of poetry, rather from their being often seen in company, than from any resemblance they bear to each other. For this reason, when I examine how far taste is concerned in these arts, I shall consider musick by itself. But either the distinction betwixt taste and judgment, which I gave your Lordship some time ago, is false,

or



or else taste is totally excluded from being a determiner in works of art, and must leave that task for judgment to perform. An art has been thus defined by one of the most sagacious of the antients, *a system of rules acquired by study, and reduced to practice, for some useful purpose.* Now wherever there is a rule or rules, by which any work is supposed to be conducted, that rule, being known, must serve equally for a standard to those who would determine with propriety concerning its merit or degree of excellence. An art, then, and whatever pretends to a standard, is an object of judgment and not of taste. As to musick, it is certainly an art, so far as geometry is concerned in it; but as the mathematical part of musick is totally unknown to 999 in a thousand of those who set up for connoisseurs in musick, including the performers, we may venture to say that it is, with regard to them, no art at all. These virtuosos, therefore, have nothing but their own taste, that is, their own private liking, to set up for a standard, or, what is little more mathematical, the liking which those of their club, city, or nation have acquired by habit, that is, by the daily repetition of a certain strain of musick. What disputes therefore happen upon that subject must be no less absurd, than when cookery is the subject of controversy. With regard

to the sister arts of painting and poetry, the case is very different: for in these arts there is not only a standard, but one so level to the common sense of mankind, that the most ignorant are acquainted with it; and, if it is unknown or mistaken by any, it is by the half-learned, who from their own conceit, or a respect for the authority of coxcombs, have tried to undervalue common sense, in order to substitute something which they thought better, in its stead.

LORD MODISH.

There is no doubt, Colonel, that there are rules for poetry and painting, and that there have been many ingenious books written both in prose and verse concerning these rules. But I fancy they are not so universally known as you would have us believe.

COL. FREEMAN.

Pardon me, my Lord; I have reason to be convinced by a thousand experiments, that the leading principle of criticism in poetry and painting, and that of all the learned principles which is the most unexceptionably true, is known to the lowest and most illiterate of the people. Those experiments are easily made. Your Lordship has only to hide yourself behind the screen in your drawing-room,

room, and order Mrs. Hannah to bring in one of your tenant's daughters, and I will venture to lay a wager that she shall be struck with your picture by La Tour, and no less with the view of your seat by Lambert, and shall, fifty to one, express her approbation by saying, they are *vastly natural*. When she has said this, she has shewn that she knew the proper standard, by which her approbation was to be directed, as much, at least, as she would have done, if she had got Aristotle by heart and all his commentators. He has defined those arts, *arts of imitation*, and his definition, though often obscured and confounded by more modern connoisseurs, has never been contradicted by any. The same country girl, who applauds the exact representation of a man and a house which she has seen, will, for the same reason, be charmed with Hogarth's march to Finchly, as that is a representation, though not of persons, yet of general manners and characters, with which we may suppose her to be acquainted. And if she is less struck with the historical pictures of distant ages and countries, though equally well painted, it is not because her critical standard is not equally applicable to them, but because the subject and manners, there meant to be represented, are to her unknown, and must pass with as little observation



tion and remark as a good portrait of a person whom she had never seen. In all this I see no pretension taste has to be consulted. It requires first eyes to see, and then judgment to compare the exhibited image with that of the absent object, which is stored up in the remembrance, and is plainly a reflective and compound operation of the mind. It is indeed so quick and instantaneous, that it often passes for a simple feeling or sentiment; and is sometimes mentioned as such by criticks of no mean reputation, for want of having considered the nature of the mental faculties with that accuracy which they deserved. The general standard of poetry is exactly the same, and equally obvious with that of painting; and any experiment you make in that art upon a farmer's daughter, will be found to have a like event. It is only middling poetry which the illiterate do not understand and admire; when it arrives at a supreme degree of excellence it is adapted to the lowest class; and though other poets might have their partisans amongst the critics, there is no question, but Homer was the delight of every cook-maid in Greece.

LORD MODISH.

What, and won't you allow good and bad in poetry to be distinguishable by taste upon any occasion?

COL.



COL. FREEMAN.

No, my Lord.

LORD MODISH.

Then, my dear Colonel, your speculations and your common language are very little consistent: for you said, no longer ago than this morning, upon glancing over some madrigals which are published in Rowe's edition of Shakespear, that the people of that age had a wretched *taste* in poetry.

COL. FREEMAN.

It is true, my Lord; and I own myself to blame in using a word upon any occasion, which, as appears by the conversation we have had, is applied to so many different purposes, as to be unfit for any. We have seen that it sometimes signifies *the faculty of distinguishing things simply and without comparison*; sometimes *that which pleases simply*; sometimes *that which pleases by particular habit*, but most commonly, *that which pleases by general habit*, or what is properly expressed by the single word *fashion*. In this last sense it was, my Lord, that I understood the word *taste*, when I said the *taste* of poetry was very bad in England, about a century ago; although it

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is certain no age ever more abounded with men of genius and study.

LORD MODISH.

Darker and darker, by Pluto ! I fancied, Colonel, about half an hour ago, that I had got a little light into your system, but now I don't see one glimpse. You told us then, that poetry was an art, and the object of judgment, and now you give us to understand, that neither imagination, reading, nor reflection, for that I suppose you mean by genius and study, are able to keep it in the right road.

COL. FREEMAN.

It is but too true, my Lord ; these things can avail but little in the conducting of poetry, if fashion, or, as they please to call it, taste, takes it into his head to mislead her. And when, by the neglect of just principles, any nation has habitually acquired a liking or taste to cookery that is unwholesome, to architecture that is inconvenient, or to poetry that, instead of instruction, conveys no ideas, or, what is worse, false ideas to the mind : we may say, with great propriety, that such a nation has a vitiated or a bad taste.

LORD

## LORD MODISH.

But how could habit, for I perceive now a little what you mean, so soon pervert our writers as to lead them all together into the same sort of error, even at the very first appearance of poetry in England?

## COL. FREEMAN.

To come easily, my Lord, to the knowledge of this, it will be necessary, once more, to turn our eyes to what was doing in the ages which preceded this. In those days, when miraculous legends under the name of history, and the absurdest of metaphysics by way of philosophy, composed almost the whole of learning; poetry, which ever shares the fate of history and philosophy, was likewise at the lowest ebb. Instead of representations of truth, and the real existence of things, it consisted only of relations in ryme of giants, winged horses, griffins, castles moated round with fire and brimstone, knights that killed ten or a dozen men by one blow, and hermits that raised as many from the dead by one prayer; with a thousand other lies, which, however monstrous and unentertaining they may appear to us, were to those people so correspondent to the ideas that had been early imposed by authority upon them, that they



appeared not only probable, but true: and although this correspondence of ideas could not be very striking, as it is impossible for the idle chimeras of a writer's brain to be exactly the same with those of his reader, yet they ceased not, along with persuasion, to give them some sort of amusement. This was the state of the epic; and low as it might be, was only to be found in the happier climates of Italy and the south of France. There likewise they pretended to a sort of lyric poetry, under the name of sonnets and madrigals, which, being founded upon the metaphysical quibbling then in vogue, instead of the truth of passion and sentiment, was wholly made up of juggling expressions, that, with much subtlety, kept up a seeming relation betwixt thoughts, in themselves, not at all akin. A sort of writing, though called by some people to this day *wit*, much inferior to fair punning; as it equally trifles with the understanding, without the merit of shaking the sides. The arts, however, by the means I mentioned some time ago, began to revive; but they did not all keep an equal pace in their improvement. Though history was soon brought, in Italy, to a great degree of excellence, philosophy, still a stranger to experiment, continued to be only a less absurd sort of metaphysics; and by keeping trifling subtleties still in request, likewise



likewise retarded the sympathetic improvement of poetry: while her sister painting, disdaining the slow, bungling, and deceitful medium of words, soon shone forth with all the lustre of nature and truth. All, however, were equally admired by the nations on this side of the Alps, who, having small pretensions of their own, and astonished with the transcendent glory of Italy, received indiscriminately every thing that came from thence as the model of perfection. In England, for causes that are easily assigned, the art of painting never took root; but, though none of our artists were inspired with the divine spirit of Raphael and Corregio, our poets were much the worse for having read Dante, Ariosto, and Petrarch; the imitation of whom they preferred to good sense and the imitation of nature. From this cause proceeded the tedious allegories, as they call them, of Spenser, and the jingling and strained conceits of Sir Philip Sidney. Happily for us there were no Italian models for tragedy; else Shakespear's Othello might have been as poor as his sonnets; and yet, even in these his most unrivalled performances, the mode is often seen to prevail over the genius and reflection of that great poet. Soon after this importation of Italian taste, the power and majesty of the Commons of England began to shew itself; and as the contests concern-

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ing the liberty and rights of Christians had introduced a spirit of enquiry into Europe, so that spirit was carried still farther in England, by a new contest concerning the peculiar rights of Englishmen. Along with liberty all manner of property was farther ascertained, and that exorbitant power restrained, which had been exercised by kings and priests over the opinions and sentiments, as well as the goods, of the people. The pleasure that arises from the discovery of truth, and the just relation of things, is one of the greatest and most lasting which human nature is capable of; and so strong it is that to stifle and repress it requires no small degree of violence. But this being withdrawn, the natural desire again takes place, and always with success. So it happened in England, where learning went hand in hand with the constitution in all its changes. As liberty and order grew, learning and just sentiments flourished; as those degenerated into enthusiasm and anarchy, a like fever succeeded in the state of literature. It was madness, indeed, but it was of the vigorous sort, from whence much good was still to be expected. Accordingly, upon the return of a more settled government at the Restoration, when liberty was tempered by a certain degree of fixed subordination, the sciences likewise took a more orderly and more polite  
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turn, without giving up any of that freedom which they had assumed. Party controversies lost much of their acrimony, and men began to use the weapons and dexterity which they had acquired in these contests, to more peaceable and more valuable purposes. The Royal Society was founded, and those hints which Sir Francis Bacon had given with regard to experimental philosophy, were diligently prosecuted by the ingenious men of that age; so that authority began, by little and little, to give way to matter of fact, supposition to certainty, and words to things. But though in motion, still the progress of poetry was slow. It is not enough for poets to compose in times of good sense: it is necessary, in order to their writing well, that they should be born in such times. The ideas, which fill the infant imagination, will always, more or less, keep possession of it; and are not easily to be changed by later knowledge and reflection. Notwithstanding these new improvements in knowledge, the gentle Waller still decked his Sacharissa, with such unscented gum-flowers as had adorned the Laura of Petrarch; and still Milton thought it proper to march his angels in a cubic phalanx of well-bodied air, to attack as formidable a body of devils, who received them with cannon in their hands, and puns in  
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their mouths. Intrepid devils, that knowing themselves to be immortal, dared to look death in the face, and to expose their unsubstantial forms to be pierced by the immaterial spears of their adversaries. What greater instance can be required of the detestable influence of romantic and scholastic jargon, than its producing such a hodge-podge in the brain of a man who has given such proofs upon other occasions, of a truly natural and noble genius. At last the Revolution, by establishing the rights of the several orders in the commonwealth upon a clear and solid basis, made way for an entire dissolution of that alliance, which had long been so stupidly and villainously cemented betwixt religion and politics. Metaphysics, now no longer necessary in support of opinions which were now no longer useful in the acquisition of power and riches, sunk by degrees into contempt; and Nature having at last shewn her true and beautiful face, poetry, from acting the part of a magic lanthorn teeming with monsters and chimeras, resumed her genuine province, like the camera obscura, of reflecting the things that are. The antient Greek and Roman poets being found to have conducted themselves more than any other, by this principle, the admiration of them encreased; and they, instead of the Italians, were chosen,



sen, to set the fashion, or, as we call it, to form the taste of writing. From them, and from their mistress Nature, Prior, Addison, Pope, Swift, Parnel, and the rest of their cotemporary bards, received the leaven, and conveyed it, in their works, to the whole mass of the people. At this very day, when few men take the trouble of becoming very learned, and fewer give to the public any proofs of their poetic fire, the taste acquired by the last age in certain kinds of poetry, still continues; and the most insipid odes, that appear in the magazines, are better able to stand a critical discussion, than those that were written by the brightest wits a hundred years ago.

LORD MODISH.

Then you esteem those magaziners to be good critics, though but paultry poets; I should think that required somewhat more learning than you seem willing to allow them.

COL. FREEMAN.

No more, my Lord, than it requires knowledge of geometry to navigate a ship to Jamaica; which, though it arises from the deepest rules of science, is daily performed by those who never heard of Euclid, and who are not capable to go through the easiest

of his demonstrations. These arts, though it cost many ages of study to men of genius to bring them to perfection, are, as far as regards a limited practice, easily communicated, by rote, to the greatest dunce. A very good pilot, who should venture to dispute upon the principles of navigation, would probably discover extreme ignorance; and the same daily happens to men of mere taste whenever they meddle with criticism: so far is good criticism from being a vulgar thing, that even the taste of the public, is still false in some kinds of poetry, particularly in tragedy; under which august title five acts of language, such as no mortal man ever spoke, seldom fails of putting the profits of three full houses into the author's pocket. A convincing proof that those who frequent the theatre judge of the elegance of a poem, as they do of the cock of a hat, and have nothing to influence them in their determination but mere taste, or a feeling of what is become by habit agreeable to them. Were they to judge by the principles of art, their decisions would be equally just in all kinds of writing.

LORD MODISH.

I hope you don't lay this likewise to the charge of the poor Italians; for I don't think

think we have ever been much troubled with their tragedies.

COL. FREEMAN.

No, my Lord, it proceeds, I apprehend, from an influence much more powerful and popular, the example of our own Shakespear; though, perhaps, the French tragedians have not been wanting with their assistance.

LORD MODISH.

This is somewhat new from you, Colonel, who used to speak with raptures of the genius of Shakespear.

COL. FREEMAN.

It is that very genius, my Lord, which is the cause of this evil; and we may say of it as Cato says of Cæsar's virtue, *Curse on his genius, it has undone his Country*. Dazzled by the shining parts of such eminent personages, we are insensibly led to admire and to imitate, without distinction, every thing that belongs to them. What we cannot admire, at first, or what we even disapprove, we receive with difference, and use brings us in time to be more or less pleased with it. All with justice applaud when Hotspur

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gives



gives the contemptuous description of the courtier who came to demand his prisoners, so full of that pride and vivacity which constitute his character; but it was never yet known that the pit treated the actor with a hiss, or an *off, off, off*, when, in his relation of Mortimer's combat with Glendower, he says

Three times they breath'd, and three times  
did they drink,

Upon agreement, of swift Severn's flood,  
Who then affrighted with their bloody  
looks,

Ran fearfully among the trembling reeds,  
And hid his crisped head in the hollow  
bank,

Blood-stained with these valiant comba-  
tants.

#### LORD MODISH.

There are, no doubt, false thoughts to be found in Shakespear; but as it is equally certain they do not bear any proportion to those that are just and noble, may not we reasonably suppose, that the imitation of him should be more useful than hurtful to our modern tragedians.

COL.



COL. FREEMAN.

That is a happiness, my Lord, which never yet befell the imitators of any of the great masters. To equal them in their beauties they must draw them, as they did, from the pure fountain of nature. Their faults they may acquire from them, as they acquired them from other faulty poets. Had not Shakespear been perverted by wrong taste and imitation, he could never have produced such lines as those I have repeated. Nature could never have pointed out to him that a river was capable of cowardice, or that it was consistent with the character of a gentleman, such as Piercy, to say *the thing that was not*. It is good rules alone that can save a poet from such blunders, which taste is ever ready to lead him into.

LORD MODISH.

Want of rules might indeed have been the cause of those errors in Shakespear; but that is not, surely, the case with the modern tragedians, either French or English. They have had critics and rules in abundance.

COL. FREEMAN.

No doubt they have, my Lord; but such critics as are worse than none; and such

rules as serve to mislead their observers to such a degree, as to make them less fit to judge of poetry than nurses and children: rules that are drawn from the works of authors, and not from common sense, or the general feelings of mankind. Ask one of those criticks for a reason, and he gives you an authority; if you repeat your demand, it's ten to one but he fobs you off with one of those cramp words, that Lady Harriot has such a dislike to. As for instance, if you ask Bossu, or any of the rest of the Aristotelians, how the Severn came to be so hen-hearted, as to turn tail and hide itself, on the sight of Glendower's and Mortimer's bloody faces, he will tell you that it is by a figure called *prosopopoeia*. This it is to understand Greek. A soundheaded, though less learned critick, would probably have said, that it was by a figure called nonsense.

## LORD MODISH.

What, and do you despise the poeticks of Aristotle, which have been revered through so many ages?

## COL. FREEMAN.

Far from it, my Lord; I look upon them as a most valuable remnant of antient erudition;

tion; and, taking all circumstances into the account, a prodigious proof of the genius of the author. But I must own I despise those moderns, who overlooking all the new discoveries, which time, perhaps, rather than human wit, has produced for them, do still, by a most unholy bigotry, put their trust in his infallibility. What would you think, Lady Harriot, of a critick who could not conceive a dramatic entertainment to subsist, with any degree of excellence, without a perpetual accompaniment of music?

LADY HARRIOT.

Indeed, Colonel, I should fancy that he had never seen any thing but Italian operas.

COL. FREEMAN.

Your Ladyship's guess, is not far wide of the mark; and yet, such is the sentiment of the great Greek, of, whose profound knowledge you must have read such wonders in Pope, and the rest of the Belles-lettres-writers of your acquaintance. If any of our London connoisseurs were to advise Garrick to get Othello set to musick, by way of giving it more force and expression, it is not likely he would be any more consulted in theatrical matters. Not that I mean to detract from the real merit of Aristotle. His  
poetic



poetic system will ever deserve the attention of the learned, as it is founded upon the solid basis of experience; but as this was only the experience of what pleased in his age and country, it is too narrow a basis to erect so lofty a pile upon, as an art of poetry. Instead of searching into nature for some universal principle of pleasure in that art, by which he might in time form the taste of his own, and of every country, he, from what happened in his time to be their taste, formed those rules which have been transmitted to us, and received as a work of deep philosophy, and in which the whole mystery of writing was revealed.

The more we examine into facts, the more reason we shall have to be convinced, that taste ought never to be allowed to dictate in poetry; since, when ever taste happens to be good, it is only the consequence, not the cause of good writing. Judgment and rules, whose humble servant and follower taste ought to be, are alone fit to decide, whether he is right or wrong.

LORD MODISH.

So then, good taste in poetry proceeds from good poetry, good poetry from good philosophy, and good philosophy from good government. A very curious genealogy.

COL.



COL. FREEMAN.

I have never yet, my Lord, met with any thing to convince me it was not a true one. And it is worth remarking, that the Italians, having recovered but little freedom in religion and government, are still extreamly behind their neighbours, the French and English, in point of philosophy, and retain pretty much the same taste of poetry which they had two hundred years ago. Ariosto is still preferred to Tasso, and both to Homer; not only by the common run, but by those who set up for criticks amongst them. As if a poet were to be esteemed excellent, in proportion as he departs from the imitation of nature, or the deficiency in that respect were to be compensated by a musical gingle and flowing combination of syllables.

In short, my Lord, altho' truth and falsehood, right and wrong, useful and prejudicial, proper and improper, will ever be universally the same in themselves, and their boundaries capable of being accurately distinguished by human reason; yet the tastes, feelings, and opinions of men, concerning any thing, must never be admitted as evidence of its being in itself good or bad: Since a very few experiments may point out to us that those tastes, depending upon various tempers, accidents and habits,

habits, are as numerous and various as the men, or sets of men, who are actuated by them. A variety the less to be argued against, as it is manifestly productive of general happiness, and in so great a degree that we may justly pronounce any society of men in an unnatural state, whenever they are deprived of the benefits arising from it. Whatever pleases, pleases; whether it be an ode of Horace, or a sermon of Whitfield; and whoever is made happy with either, he has my most hearty congratulations, neither, were I willing to condemn him, should I know how to go about it. But if not content with this toleration, he persists in affirming that the one of these is in itself preferable to the other; I expect that he will lay aside his taste, and give me his reasons. Upon such like occasions it has sometimes, too often, happened that in default of reasons, force, and terror have been applied, in order to produce an uniformity in thinking, and to render the taste and opinion of the strongest, the catholic, or universal. And then, woe! to the wretched sons of Adam!

LADY MODISH.

My Lord, are you for drinking tea under the oak, or shall it be brought hither?

LORD

## LORD MODISH.

I think, my dear, it will be pleasanter out of doors this fine evening. Well, Colonel, I see this is your day; and that I am but ill prepared to be a champion for taste. But, as Patroclus says to Hector, you have not long to enjoy your triumph; for to-morrow I expect Jack Maggot. He, you know, is a great *dilettante*, and full of taste to the brim; and I doubt not of seeing you brought to shame for the complication of heresies you have uttered this afternoon.

## COL. FREEMAN.

My Lord, I accept the challenge, and desire only a clear stage. Allons.



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Lord MORDEN.

I think my dear friend, it will be interesting out  
of doors, this fine evening. Will Colonel  
I see this is your day; and that I am but ill  
prepared to be a champion for cause. But as  
Pamphlet says to the effect, you have not long  
to enjoy your triumph; for tomorrow I  
expect Jack Mordaunt will know it's great  
illness, and all of mine to the point.  
and I doubt not you thought to  
share for the comfort of justice, you  
have secured this afternoon.



Col. FREEMAN.

My Lord, I accept the challenge, and do  
the only thing I can.